



Are we punching our weight?

Ella Rhodes asks whether psychology is truly having impact



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Psychological Society
Promoting excellence in psychology

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The British
Psychological Society
Promoting excellence in psychology

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April issue

45,089 dispatched

Printed by



Warners Midlands plc
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ISSN 0952-8229

Cover

www.muralswallpaper.co.uk

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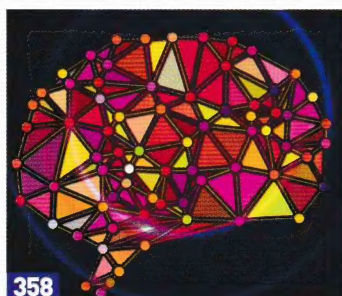
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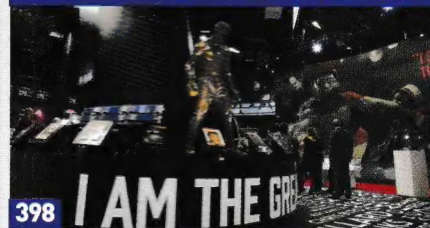
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the issue

'Everything is crumbling', proclaimed a recent *Slate* headline above a piece on the latest twist in the tale of psychology's 'replication crisis'. A touch of melodrama, chosen mainly to go with a photo of some cookies, or a wake-up call for our discipline?

This issue is littered with two themes, if you care to pick them up: one, that much of what passes as psychological research is rubbish, and two, that many people are trying to clean up.

If this debate smacks of navel gazing, it's important to note that the 'clean-up' can and should involve innovative and modern ways of doing things, of engaging the public, of seeking genuine 'impact'. There are plenty of examples this month.

So let's not be downbeat. These problems may be rife throughout science: psychologists are unusual in their willingness to thrash it out in public. Debate makes us stronger, and psychology *can* punch its weight. As incoming Society President Peter Kinderman says in his 'One on one', 'we can still choose how to respond; how to fight against creation'.

Dr Jon Sutton

Managing Editor @psychmag



Big picture centre-page pull-out poetry as a mental health resource; words and poem by **Helena Dunthorne**; and we launch our second annual poetry competition

Rethinking practitioner roles

We write as counselling psychologists who find ourselves working in traditional clinical, forensic, paediatric and academic contexts. This experience has led us to query the role, utility and validity of the historical and current taxonomy of our profession.

In 2009 the Health and Care Professions Council became the statutory regulator of practitioner psychologists. This process involved consultation of key stakeholders in order to identify who should be regulated and the knowledge and skills that would determine the standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists. An unintended consequence of this was the cementing of historical role titles and reinforcement of tacit beliefs related to an arguably outdated discourse of difference.

The demand on psychology appears to have now shifted focus going beyond the interdisciplinary boundaries defined by the parameters of the service organisation and the needs of their client group. *New Ways of Working* (BPS, 2007) saw the traditional roles expanding in favour of psychological consultancy in multidisciplinary teams, not least due to a shortage of skilled psychologists available service-wide.

Unintentionally the BPS added to the confusion in 2011 by putting in place a requirement for all clinical psychology roles to be opened up to counselling psychologists. With this came an increase in the 'Clinical/Counselling' title being integrated into job descriptions and job specifications. The move though did not reflect in the roles of health and forensic psychologists.

The clinical reality for psychology is rather different, with client needs that often can be met by more than one area of speciality. For example, a client's anxiety in the area of physicality might be addressed either by a health, clinical or counselling psychologist. How do we define our area of expertise? More significantly, how relevant are these labels to clients' own phenomenological experiences.

In the workplace we increasingly employ a biopsychosocial perspective in the organisational and clinical setting. Through an understanding of systemic models we engage with human function and distress aiming to understand psychological manifestations of struggle in the wider context of the lived experience. If we are seeking an integration of therapeutic modalities with a view to achieving a more holistic and responsive service for our clients, should we not also be holding the same lens up to ourselves? Perhaps the question is: Why at a time when psychology is under increased threat from budget cuts do we not attempt to rethink our role?

In the meantime the BPS takes cautious steps in engagement in an International Declaration on Core Competences in Professional Psychology (BPS, 2015). With a concern being raised that the International Declaration 'as it currently stands,



Don't ignore biological factors

I am unsure which part of my letter ('Keep looking for biological causes', February, 2016) was unclear to Richard Hassall ('Schizophrenia and biology', Letters, March 2016) and made him think I was perhaps offering a defence of

the scientific or clinical validity of schizophrenia, or otherwise commenting on 'whether or not schizophrenia is a distinct illness with a biological basis'.

Richard may have missed my point. I was merely

advocating for continued tolerance of the potentially diverse origins of future advances in the understanding and care of people with 'functional' mental health conditions – as exemplified, so strikingly in this instance,

in the encephalitis/psychosis/ (diagnosis of) schizophrenia findings. I also wondered if there is a small group within our profession that is becoming intolerant of such issues: it sounds like Richard, for one, thinks there might be.

contribute

THE PSYCHOLOGIST NEEDS YOU!

Letters

These pages are central to The Psychologist's role as a forum for communication, discussion and controversy among all members of the Society, and we welcome your contributions. Send e-mails marked 'Letter for publication' to psychologist@bps.org.uk; or write to the Leicester office.



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Robert Sternberg, Oklahoma State University

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does not sufficiently represent, even at a broad, generic level, the competences required for the professional practice of psychology as they have been defined in the United Kingdom' (BPS, 2015, p.2). The authors wonder how this relates to the state of UK practice.

The question proposed is whether we should seek to either separate or align the practitioner roles. Accepting that within them we all have specialties but that these do not necessarily cause differences in how we should be defined. That the titles we have sought to create, Counselling, Clinical, Health or Forensic, are often illusory not only to ourselves but also to the roles we take on which seek to elevate and confuse our purpose even further.

Sacha Lawrence

Oxford

Elaine Mayon-White

Ashford, Kent

Malcolm Cross

London SW10

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- British Psychological Society (2007). *New ways of working for applied psychologists in health and social care: Working psychologically in teams*. Leicester: Author.
- British Psychological Society (2015, December). *British Psychological Society response to the International Project on Competence in Psychology*. Final Draft [v1.0] International Declaration on Core Competences in Professional Psychology.



Either way, if there was lack of clarity in my letter there was surely none in Anna Galloway's powerful account of her own family's experience of encephalitis presenting atypically as a severe 'functional' mental health condition (Letters, March 2016). A similar narrative has been popularised in *Brain on Fire: My Month of Madness* (Cahalan, 2013).

Those affected by such conditions will be better served by due acknowledgement of potential 'biological' bases of their

condition (where they pertain), and also by avoidance of the presumption that their psychological distress, disturbance or difference necessarily or singularly arises from factors such as trauma, adversity or mal-attachment (nor do I understate how often those factors are relevant).

Patients/clients are ultimately be better served by biopsychosocial formulations rather than psychological ones.

Patrick Vesey

Consultant Clinical

Neuropsychologist

Nottingham University Hospitals

NHS Trust

Reference

- Cahalan, S. (2013). *Brain on fire: My month of madness*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

LGBT prisoners

I read with great interest your four feature articles that pertained to life in prison ('The survival secrets of solitaires', 'The emperor's new clothes?', 'Rehabilitation – writing a new story' and 'Understanding the experience of imprisonment', March 2016). What I found was missing from these pieces was a mention of the struggles endured by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) prisoners. Through this exclusion, these pieces continue to cast a shadow over LGBT prisoners and their experiences within prison. Unfortunately, despite being disproportionately overrepresented within the criminal justice system, LGBT prisoners and their physical, psychological and social health needs continue to be 'hidden' and 'overlooked' (Carr, et al., 2016).

Conducting research with or providing psychological services to LGBT prisoners is exceptionally difficult work. Sexual orientation and gender identity are terms that have only recently received attention within the UK criminal justice system, with prisons in England and Wales beginning data collection in 2011 (Dunn, 2013). Many have questioned the data collection methods of these prisons as being insensitive and not particularly effective (Dunn, 2013).

There are many reasons why individuals may not wish to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity while in prison. Incidents of homophobia, biphobia and, especially, transphobia are common. Many individuals fear being discriminated against and intimidated, and being the victims of physical and sexual violence. Some individuals fear losing support from family, friends or their communities (Dunn, 2013). Simply put: LGBT people don't feel safe in prison. As a result, many of the physical, psychological and social health needs of LGBT prisoners are neglected. Recent research has shown that LGBT people face more health inequities when compared with heterosexuals (Institute of Medicine, 2011). For instance, LGBT people exhibit higher rates of chronic illnesses, like cardiovascular disease and certain forms of cancer, as well as mental health concerns, like depression, anxiety and suicide.

Researchers have called for more primary research to better understand the experiences as well as health and service needs of LGBT prisoners, especially pertaining to psychological wellbeing (Carr et al., 2016). Additional rigorous secondary and tertiary research is also needed to examine important moderators and mediators involved in constructing theoretically designed health interventions that are both sensitive to the needs of LGBT prisoners and effective. In a sense, we need more research to see where and how we can help in the best possible manner given current environmental and social constraints.

The health needs of LGBT prisoners are real and deserve attention. Focused research and effective health services are desperately needed not only while LGBT people remain in prison, but also after their release. Making their experiences and needs visible is one important step that can be taken to ensure such empirical work takes place.

Paul F. Gorczynski

Department of Sport and Exercise Science

University of Portsmouth

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- Dunn, P. (2013). Slipping off the equalities agenda? Work with LGBT prisoners. *Prison Service Journal*, 206, 3–10.
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A therapy for each client

I was reading Jemma Broadstock's letter 'Tailoring the treatment' (March 2016), where she movingly described how she designed an app to help her brother through his feelings of anxiety and pointlessness because his CBT 'homework' failed to engage him. Her aim was to signpost the need for treatments to take into account the individuality of each person, especially young people. Then I read a sentence that made me jump

straight out of my armchair and onto my PC: 'Whilst I appreciate that developing a therapy for each client would be time-consuming and impractical...'. Well, good news, Jemma – this therapy already exists and it's called integrative psychotherapy (or integrative counselling psychology).

I have to admit it makes my blood boil to see how much CBT has become a synonym for counselling

through its near monopolistic use by the NHS, and how little awareness there is of alternatives. I trained as an integrative psychotherapist to learn from many modalities, such as CBT, psychodynamics, gestalt, transactional analysis, existentialism, phenomenology, mindfulness, precisely because I do not believe that 'one size fits all'.

Change happens not when we apply one method or technique to all but when the

client is the starting point and feels seen and understood as a unique individual. I say it is high time our accrediting professional bodies such as the UKCP and BACP, or ourselves as practitioners, make people like Jemma aware that what they wish for is already out there, although unfortunately mostly unavailable on the NHS.

Corinne Lowry
Barnet
Hertfordshire

Felt presence and the 'hard problem'

One class of those experiencing a 'felt presence' is missing from Alderson-Day's otherwise excellent review ('The silent companions', April 2016) – the category of those *intentionally* cultivating such experiences. Arzy and Idel (2015) have drawn attention to a subset of Jewish mystics who pursued practices clearly designed to induce alterations in the sense of self, culminating in some cases with mystics experiencing autoscapy, whereby they converse with their double standing in front of them.

These, or similar, practices are not confined to Jewish mysticism, being found throughout diverse traditions, and are probably also related to more recreational use of some psychedelics. Whilst the neurocognitive aspects of such states may, as Arzy and Idel propose, be common across all cases – mystical and pathological – the importance of including this category of those intentionally seeking alterations in their experience lies in what they contribute to our understanding of the self. Far from being a pathological disruption of those processes that bring about the everyday sense of self, these mystical felt presences might be a means for enriching our grasp of the role self plays in our lives.

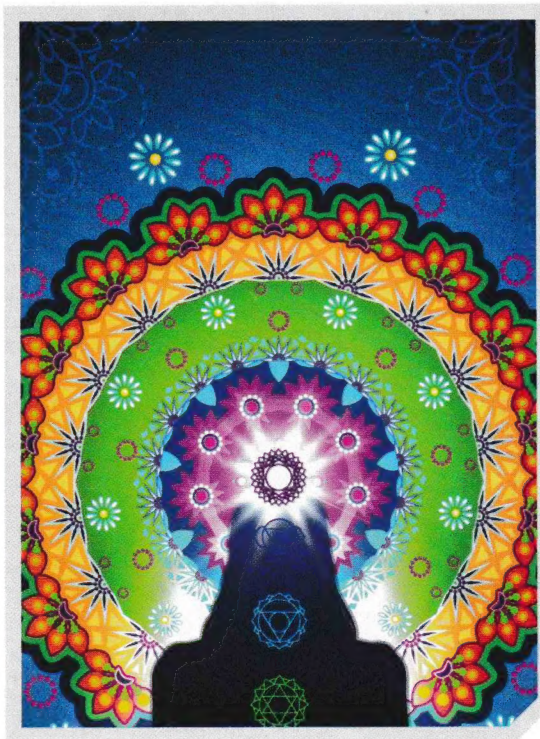
The most gripping of all felt presences is indeed that of the everyday sense of self. Yet why any sense of presence should exist remains a mystery – it is the core of the 'hard problem' of consciousness, as articulated by Chalmers (1995). Silberstein and Chemero (2015) have argued for a neutral monist understanding of consciousness, i.e. that both mind and

matter derive from a more basic foundation that is neither one nor the other (hence 'neutral'). Many have made such claims; of interest in our context is the suggestion by Silberstein and Chemero that the neutral quality is best captured by the term 'presence'. As Seager puts it, 'The neutral monist claim that it [presence] forms the bedrock of reality is surprisingly powerful and fertile, and may yet help us understand reality and our place within it' (cited in Silberstein and Chemero, 2013, p.192). I would argue that this is the critical point about mystics and shamans exploring alterations in the felt presence of self: they delve more deeply into that 'bedrock of reality' than do those not so motivated, bringing knowledge that enriched the cultures to which they belonged. And, to quote Silberstein and Chemero, 'Given that presence is fundamental, it cannot be defined in terms of other concepts, of either a material or mental nature' (p.193).

B. Les Lancaster
Past Chair, BPS Transpersonal Psychology Section
Emeritus Professor of Transpersonal Psychology, Liverpool John Moores University

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- Silberstein, M. & Chemero, A. (2015). Extending neutral monism to the hard problem. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 22(3–4), 181–194.



Mystics and shamans delve more deeply into that 'bedrock of reality' than do those not so motivated

Shy of reward

I understood what the letter titled 'Discipline in schools' (February 2016) was getting at. Those who misbehave in class are likely to be encouraged to behave better by the incentive of getting their names up on a board via a joint classroom reward system, creating almost an environment for healthy competition with the generally good students who can get their names on the board rather easily. Thus, class behaviour as a whole is likely to be improved and control for the teacher can become easier.

However, throughout the letter I could not help but think back to my own childhood in primary and secondary

education, where such a reward system was used in class, and the idea that while behaviour is improved by such a system, there is negative effect on those remaining children in class who are well behaved yet shy. Being one of those children myself, I remember always feeling inadequate after class at not being able to have the confidence to get my name up on the board. In fact, the lack of confidence was enhanced by such a regime, meaning that I felt class feeling negative and deflated. I have seen this occur many times in classes having worked with children for over six years in a classroom environment as my family run a Saturday school. Even

with other incentives such as stickers, etc. I saw that the idea of competing with the more confident members of the class for the same goal was too intimidating for them and they often left class crying because they remained without such praise or sense of achievement.

Perhaps there is a reward system that can still engage the students without amplifying the insecurities of shyer pupils or without causing any negative effects at all? Maybe even something that could encourage these pupils to contribute in class is possible.

Alexis Baker
Tonbridge, Kent

Organising our branches

The role of BPS Branches has recently been under consideration. There is current progress towards the devolution of the Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland Branches to new forms. In the meanwhile the English Branches survive as diverse structures – some progressive, some somnolent.

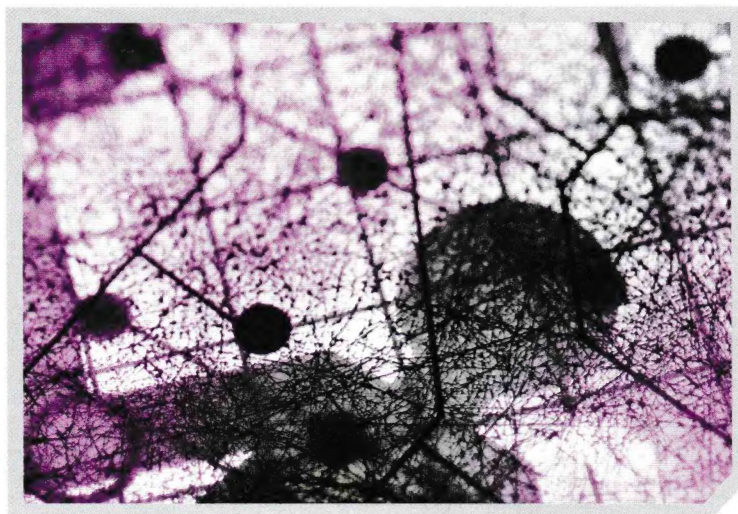
The goals of the BPS are well detailed, but the structure and associated processes of the BPS in support of these goals are less well defined. As a bureaucratic organisation, the BPS is to a large extent supported by committees; committees being groups of individuals sharing common interests and an understanding of the remit of the committee. However, individual committee members' goals may differ. Committees mainly influence an organisation's policy, but do not necessarily promote it, and are often slow to respond to matters of concern related to the committee remit.

Committees are unlikely to constitute a team. In contrast, Branch team members have shared goals, assigned roles, and aim together for the dynamic satisfaction of these goals. Moreover, a Branch team dynamically liaises on a daily basis with psychologists, other professionals, and the general public in order to promote BPS policy within their geographical area; that should be their specific role within the BPS.

Importantly, the nature of team skills is different from that of individual or committee participatory skills; an individual may be highly educated and experienced in their own skill, but that expertise does not necessarily morph into team-related skills as needed by Branches – this is not obviously considered by the BPS.

Developing on a model on team properties (namely, the '7Cs' of teamwork as Command, Control, Communication, Co-ordination, Co-operation, Cohesion, Cybernation: Swezey & Salas, 1992), a related article to this letter has been published in the spring 2016 issue of *South West Review* (available through the BPS Shop at <http://tinyurl.com/jg4j9su>). From reasoning based on the '7Cs' model a set of 10 suggestions were offered in the article on how Branches should be improved, in sum that:

1. The society should carefully delegate control to Branches.
2. A Branch team should be tasked to act dynamically and directly as the BPS area representative to the general public.



3. Team training is made available through the BPS and for selected members of the BPS Branches.
4. The BPS introduces an improved society communication protocol that is trained and effective.
5. Video conferencing facilities are supplied to Branch Hubs.
6. A Branch should have a single point of contact at the BPS with relation to Branch matters.
7. The BPS yearly monies to the Branch should be based on an agreed business plan for that Branch.
8. The Branch Secretary is a paid post.
9. The Branch Secretary is provided with access to a dedicated work space with commensurate role equipment.
10. Branch team members, particularly student volunteers, should be rewarded for good contributions by some form of BPS acknowledgement.

Iain Macleod

Registered Occupational Psychologist
Chair BPS South West of England Branch

Reference

Swezey, R.W. & Salas, E. [1992]. *Teams: Their training and performance*. Stamford, CT: Ablex Publishing.

Feedback needed

I decided to write this letter after reading the advice Roxane L. Gervais gave to aspiring psychologists in the latest issue of *The Psychologist* (March, 2016): 'Network, volunteer, get involved with the BPS. *You will always find someone willing to help you to progress your career*' (emphasis added).

I became a member of the BPS from my first year of undergraduate study. I attended conferences, talks, and was eager to show my genuine interest and enthusiasm for the field by approaching researchers and professionals. I sent dozens of emails following such networking events, expressing my availability to work or volunteer on their projects. I still wonder if anybody read them.

After having applied to a CAP course (the Scottish equivalent of IAPT courses) and being unsuccessful on the interview, I requested feedback on my performance. The email with the feedback came three months later and it consisted of five sentences of general statements, including the famous '...however, on the day there were candidates who were

able to demonstrate stronger understanding and responses to all questions'. After over two weeks of mulling over whether it would be appropriate to ask for more detailed information, I finally sent an email requesting further clarification. I am still waiting for a reply.

Following my experience of applying for several assistant psychologist jobs and failing the interview, I believe that honest, personalised feedback is rather an exception. A rare, fortunate opportunity and the only thing, apart from hard work, that can actually make you a better applicant.

I don't believe I am entitled to receive anything. I am aware that competition is fierce and the pressure is high on candidates and employers equally. I am trying my best to follow every piece of advice I receive. My message to employers and interview panels: please take the time and send your feedback to that oblivious aspiring psychologist. Be that helping hand. The silence is earsplitting.

Anca Panescu
Glasgow

Blog on

I much enjoyed the piece on blogging in the April edition of *The Psychologist* ('Welcome to blogademia') but would like to emphasise that you do not need to be a computer whizz-kid to blog. I find it simple to write blogs in conventional text and submit them to the LSE Impact of Social Sciences Blog (impactofsocialsciences@lse.ac.uk). Here all the text settings, including the addition of pictures, and links to any papers you refer to, are done for you and, since this blog reaches over 50,000 readers a month, why not take a look?

James Hartley
Keele



obituary

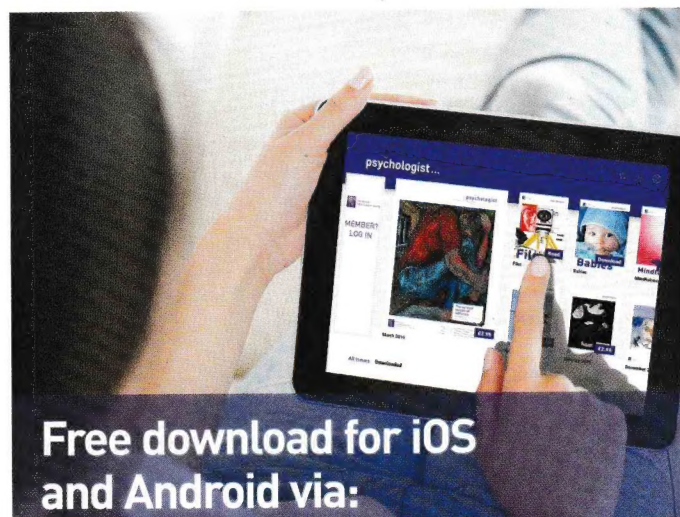
John F. Cole (1941–2016)



Many former colleagues and associates in the world of education will be saddened to learn of the passing of John Cole at the age of 74 on 11 March 2016. His terminal cancer was diagnosed shortly after Christmas, and John died in his sleep at his home in Castle Cary.

John's service with Somerset County Council as an educational psychologist was long and distinguished, spanning the years 1971 to 1995, first in a senior position at Yeovil and later as Head of Service. Apart from overseeing and steering the expansion of the service during some turbulent years in education, John developed a specialist interest in the needs of hearing-impaired children and later took a managerial responsibility in the development of this service also. After leaving the Somerset service John worked as Head of a Special School for two years before developing a consultancy, combining this with his many outside interests and extensive travelling with his beloved wife, Trina.

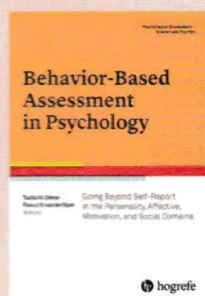
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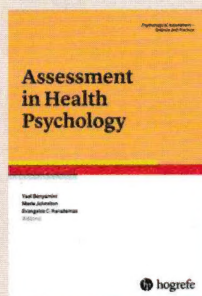
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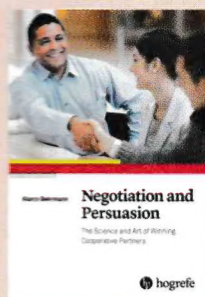
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Marco Behrmann

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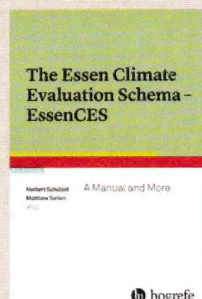
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Norbert Scholast / Matthew Tonkin (Eds.)

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Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 4SB
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Innovative approach to hostels shows promise

A project aimed at encouraging homeless people to engage in psychological treatment and support, and maintain accommodation, has reported very promising outcomes after a £1.3 million expansion. Clinical lead of the Psychology in Hostels Project, Dr Emma Williamson, spoke to *The Psychologist* about the project's successes and potential for further growth.

The Psychology in Hostels Project was originally commissioned four years ago after the London Borough of Lambeth's (LBL) adult directorate approached the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) and homeless charity Thames Reach to change the approach used in hostels for the homeless. Clinical psychologist Dr Williamson and an assistant psychologist from SLaM, worked in partnership with Thames Reach Waterloo Project hostel team to develop this innovative pilot service redesign.

There is a group of homeless people,

Williamson said, who have difficulty maintaining accommodation. Some struggle with a 'claustro-agoraphobic' dilemma. Those with early histories of trauma or disruption can struggle to find an area where they are not so close they feel trapped, intruded upon or threatened but also do not feel isolated or abandoned. She added: 'This group can find it very hard to find a comfortable place to exist, and bounce in and out of services, struggling to settle and make use of support. It is knowledge of this experience and an understanding of the high levels of complex trauma and unmet mental health need that led LBL to consider trialling development of a psychologically informed environment (PIE) hostel in south London.'

At the hostel Williamson looked into work by Johnson and Haigh on psychologically informed environments: 'It is recommended that a coherent shared psychological understanding

within an environment is the best way to facilitate growth, recovery and enablement. Together the psychologists and hostel staff designed an onsite psychologically informed environment service aimed at helping residents sustain accommodation and promoting access to services which would enable inclusion and engagement in opportunities.' This was seen as an environment where everything could potentially be informed by the psychological needs of the client group.

Williamson and her assistant psychologist worked full-time within the hostel environment itself and were available for informal engagement work and involved with the day-to-day goings-on in the hostel. The clients themselves could approach the psychologists on their terms and when more comfortable could have more formal treatment including mentalisation-based treatment (MBT) on an individual or group basis and take part in the MBT-informed art group and other hostel activities. Another key aspect of the onsite approach was that psychologists and hostel staff were able to work jointly in supporting clients, as well as receiving regular reflective practice, consultation and training.

The outcomes from this initial work, Williamson said, were 'outstanding'. She added: 'We saw great outcomes in terms of mental health improvement and a reduction in drug and alcohol use, emergency service use, a 51 per cent reduction in all types of criminal justice contact in a one year sample and crucially people stabilising and sustaining accommodation where they had had trouble before.'

Based on this the partnership applied to the Guy's and St Thomas' Charity to expand the project, with the aim of working towards mainstream commissioning. They were awarded £1.3 million in funding starting in January 2015; this expansion included a larger clinical team working across a variety of sites in three hostel settings. They continued work in the original 19-bed hostel in Waterloo but expanded to include a 69-bed facility in Vauxhall and a five-bed supported housing complex with female-only clients.

She explained: 'We were finding certain subgroups of the population continued to be harder to engage with direct psychological support, including females and those with poly-substance misuse (drugs and alcohol).' The original hostel had recently undergone a renovation at the start of the pilot, and was a mixed-gender service, and so the



Pictures: left, one of the clients responsible for maintaining the project's therapeutic garden; above, a resident displaying his artwork from the therapeutic art group, artwork that was also showcased on the front of Europe-wide homelessness magazine – *Feantsa*; and below, Emma Williamson speaking to a client.

team were keen to explore applications of their PIE model in female-only settings, larger hostels, supported accommodation settings and those that had not had large capital investment in the building.

The expansion saw Williamson continue in the clinical lead role while two specialist clinical psychologists, two assistant psychologists and an administrator were also taken on. They also introduced one session of psychiatry to be available each week to the clients with the aim of increasing accessibility of timely psychiatric input and referrals

into mainstream services. They are now developing a peer mentoring service for clients to hear the experiences of others who had been in their shoes and who will deliver psychologically informed support, training and advocacy.

The service has also developed a transition arm helping individuals to make the move into different accommodation and offering support and training to other accommodation providers working with those clients. They have bought in two evaluation teams – Southampton University to carry out a clinical evaluation, and Resolving

Chaos for an economic evaluation to complement in-house evaluation.

The early outcomes from the external and internal evaluations, Williamson said, had been 'really positive'. She added: 'We've continued to build on the great outcomes seen in the initial pilot. Our in-house evaluations have seen a clinically significant reduction in psychological distress. Early indicators from the Southampton University assessment show there have been improvements in emotion regulation among clients as well as a reduction in incidents of aggression and alcohol use. Theoretically this would make sense with people better able to regulate their emotions and therefore less distressed, less aggressive and relying less on alcohol, which in itself feeds into cycles of distress and aggression.'

Of the future, Williamson spoke about the ongoing work needed in developing the evidence base for meeting the complex needs of homeless people and highlighting the gaps in current service provision which PIE approaches can answer. 'We are gathering further health-economic data demonstrating the impact of our integrated service approach and finding promising early indications of savings across the system. This group have for so long struggled to access appropriate support and have provision of services that will meet them where they are at – we are addressing that and we feel that outcomes speak for themselves'. ER



Replication – latest twists

The findings of last year's Reproducibility Project, which aimed to replicate 100 psychology studies but only managed to do so in around 40 per cent of cases, have been thrown into question by a new report. The Open Science Collaboration's work, which some took as an indication of ongoing 'crisis' in the field, has been openly questioned by a group led by Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert.

Gilbert, Gary King and Stephen Pettigrew (also Harvard), alongside Stephen Timothy D. Wilson (University of Virginia), wrote the comment piece for *Science* criticising the original Open Science Collaboration (OSC) study around three areas: error, power and bias. They suggest the original report made conclusions that were not supported due to statistical errors. Without these, they claim, the conclusion may have been that the reproducibility of psychological science is actually quite high.

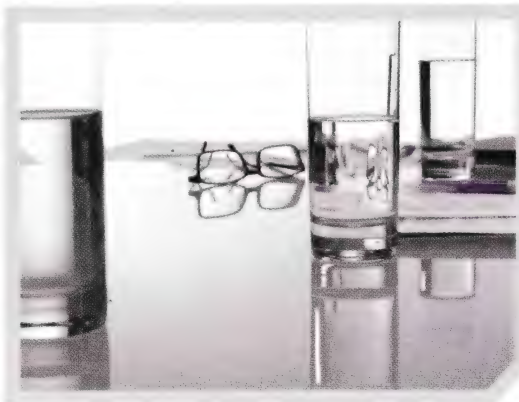
On the topic of error, the authors write that even if an original study shows a true effect a replication may not show that effect due to sampling error – as it is often impossible to replicate an original experimental population. The authors used a statistical benchmark that assumed sampling error to be the only source of error in the data – however, as Gilbert and his colleagues point out, the replications tended to differ quite substantially from the original research.

Some examples of the methods and populations used in a few of the replications are also listed: 'An original study that measured Americans' attitudes toward African-Americans was replicated with Italians, who do not share the same stereotypes; an original study that asked college students to imagine being called on by a professor was replicated with participants who had never been to college; and an original study that asked students who commute to school to choose between apartments that were short and long drives from campus was replicated with students who do not commute to school.'

They write that these infidelities in the replications are potential sources of random error. They also point to the power of the OSC project, which only attempted to replicate each study once. However one of the OSC's corresponding authors, Brian Nosek and his Many Labs Project, included 36 labs replicating 16 original studies repeatedly – leading to 574 replications.

Gilbert and his colleagues point out this more powerful method led to a full 85 per cent of original studies being replicated. If the MLP had used the OSC's methods what would have happened to this result? The authors say the MLP would only have reported a replication rate of 34 per cent.

Finally, the authors point to a worrying hint that bias may have been at play in the original study. The OSC asked the authors of original studies to rate the methodological approach to the replication – and whether they endorsed the new approach or not. In comparing unendorsed vs. endorsed study methodologies, those that were endorsed were almost four times as likely to lead to a successful replication. They write: 'If OSC had limited their analyses to endorsed studies, they would have found that 59.7 per cent... were replicated successfully.'



The original OSC authors have published a rebuttal, saying: 'Their very optimistic assessment is based on statistical misconceptions and selective interpretation of correlational data.' But what have the media and academics made of this criticism?

Writing for the *New York Times* Benedict Carey spoke to a researcher at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Uri Simonsohn, who has blogged on the topic. He told Carey the original replication paper and the critique used statistical approaches that were 'predictably imperfect' for this kind of analysis. One way to think about the dispute, Simonsohn said, is that 'the original paper found that the glass was about 40 percent full, and the critique argues that it could be 100 percent full. In fact... State-of-the-art techniques designed to evaluate replications say it is 40 percent full, 30 percent empty, and the remaining

30 percent could be full or empty, we can't tell till we get more data.'

Journalist and editor of *Nature Reports Stem Cells*, Monya Baker, wrote that, according to statistician Andrew Gelman, replications tend to be reliable guides to the existence and power of effects in psychology: 'That's in part because what is published in the original studies tends to be the statistical "flukes" that are left standing after the researchers have cast around to find publishable, positive results. In contrast, for replication projects analysis plans are put in place before a study begins.'

Baker also spoke to Steve Lindsay, a psychologist at the University of Victoria in Canada and interim editor of the journal *Psychological Science*, who said: 'We have a lot of reasons to believe that a lot of psychologists have for a long time tended to systematically exaggerate the effects of what they publish'. He added that the real urgency lay in improving bad practices.

Reporting for *The Verge*, Jacob Kastrenakes, writes that, for now, there is no real answer to which of the sides in this debate is correct. He spoke to John Ioannidis, the Stanford professor who wrote the famous 2005 paper 'Why most published research findings are false'. He said: 'Even the top of the top scientists can disagree in interpretation of what are very solid results.' Although not involved with the psychology study or its critique, he added that the critique didn't change his reading of the original OSC study. He told Kastrenakes that they may have overestimated the number of reproducible studies, but that constructive debate was useful.

Kastrenakes goes on: 'Gilbert would argue that, regardless of the field, taking a better approach to replication in the first place should lead to clearer results. "Yes, replicating can be done well, and yes, doing it well is hard," he [Gilbert] writes in an all-caps email to *The Verge*. "But just because it is hard to do something well does not mean that you should do it badly. This applies both to replication and playing the violin in public."

On the Mind Hacks blog Tom Stafford (University of Sheffield) points to a Bayesian reanalysis of the reproducibility project by Alexander Etz. Stafford writes: 'This take on the project is a great example of how open science allows people to more easily build on your results, as well as being a vital complement to the original report – not least because it stops you

naively accepting any simple statistical report of the what the reproducibility project “means”. The analysis is now available as a paper on *PLoS One*. Their interpretation of the reliability of psychology, as informed by the reproducibility project, is as follows: ‘Overall, 75% of studies gave qualitatively similar results in terms of the amount of evidence provided. However, the evidence was often weak... The majority of the studies (64%) did not provide strong evidence for either the null or the alternative hypothesis in either the original or the replication... We conclude that the apparent failure of the Reproducibility Project to replicate many target effects can be adequately explained by overestimation of effect sizes (or overestimation of evidence against the null hypothesis) due to small sample sizes and publication bias in the psychological literature.’

Katie M. Palmer, writing for *Wired*, said: ‘Emotions are running high. Two groups of very smart people are looking at the exact same data and coming to wildly different conclusions. Science hates that. This is how beleaguered Gilbert feels: When I asked if he thought his defensiveness might have colored his interpretation of this data, he hung up on me.’

Gilbert said to her: ‘Most people assume that when you say the word replication, you’re talking about a study that differed in only minor, uncontrollably minor details.’ Palmer adds: ‘That wasn’t the case in many of the Project’s replications, which depended on a small budget and volunteered time. Some studies were so difficult or expensive to replicate that they just ... didn’t get replicated at all, including one of Gilbert’s.’

Andrew D. Wilson and Sabrina Golonka, two psychologists from Leeds Beckett University who tweet as @psychscientists, commented on another brewing replication story: ‘Failure to replicate one version of the task, everyone loses their minds in panic... Plus the media angle is all “game over, man!” even though this is just step 1.’ They referred back to their 2013 blog post, ‘Replication will not save psychology’: ‘Being able to replicate a study is an effect, not a cause of good scientific practice. So the emphasis on replication as a goal has the whole thing backwards. We should actually be focusing on improving the experiments we run in the first place. If we run better experiments, the replicability will take care of itself.’

Meanwhile, Roy Baumeister – whose

‘ego depletion’ account of willpower is a high-profile example of a theory that is currently struggling to replicate – wrote in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* on ‘Charting the future of social psychology on stormy seas’. ‘We have created a career niche for bad experimenters,’ he argued. ‘This is an underappreciated fact about the current push for publishing failed replications. I submit that some experimenters are incompetent. In the past their careers would have stalled and failed. But today, a broadly incompetent experimenter can amass a series of impressive publications simply by failing to replicate other work and thereby publishing a series of papers that will achieve little beyond undermining our field’s ability to claim that it has accomplished anything.’

Whether psychology’s glass is half full or half empty, expect this story to run and run... it is of course possible that the paper that said ‘the paper that said that psychology isn’t reliable isn’t reliable’, isn’t reliable. **ER**

For a hyperlinked version of this piece, see <https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/replication-glass-half-full-half-empty-or-irrelevant>. See also our Research Digest April fool!



STUDENTS BECOME PIONEERS FOR JUSTICE

University of Bolton psychology students have become pioneers in a new Neighbourhood Justice Panel (NJP) scheme, joining a team that works to settle local disputes and minor crimes. Bolton is the first university in the region to have students volunteering on such a panel.

An NJP is a voluntary process that brings together victims and wrongdoers, or two

parties unable to settle their differences. The panels encourage wrongdoers to acknowledge the impact of what they have done and make amends to the victim and wider community.

The aim is to resolve conflict and harm caused by antisocial behaviour and crime. Dr Gill Allen and Dr Michelle Lowe, from the university’s School of

Education and Psychology, said they were thrilled with the students’ response and the future career opportunities the panel may give them.

Allen said: ‘We’re delighted to be the first university in the region to have its students working within a project like this, and we believe we are the first in the country. For our students this is experience

which is directly linked to many of the career paths they can pursue after they graduate.’

The project is one of several to develop from a Memorandum of Understanding, signed between the University’s School of Education and Psychology and Greater Manchester Police in September 2015, which was reported in *The Psychologist* (tinyurl.com/hskw372). **ER**

Multifaceted and intricate

Ella Rhodes reports on some of the psychology and psychiatry events at this year's Cambridge Science Festival fortnight

A play inspired by research on bipolar disorder, thinking styles and emotion was shown at the Cambridge Science Festival; *Pictures of You* told the moving story of two old friends reunited and attempting to re-establish intimacy. The two characters presented two different styles of thinking; one a free-spirited and joyful woman who thought mainly in images, her friend a more controlled and negative person who thought in a more verbal style. The two, both psychology graduates, meet atop a hill after a traumatic break in their

perspective. The multifaceted and intricate aspect of imagery is what captured the imagination of Menagerie Theatre Company to produce their play.

Hitchcock suggested that people fall on a continuum when it comes to verbal or visual thinking, and some will use the former when thinking about negative or troubling memories to avoid reliving an event in pictures.

After the emotional denouement of the play, funded by the MRC, a second panel took questions from the audience; psychiatrists Muzaffer Kaser and Akeem Sule, playwright Craig Baxter and cognitive scientist Phil Barnard spoke about their experience of collaborations between arts and sciences in mental health.

Viren Swami (Anglia Ruskin University) attracted a packed lecture theatre for a talk on the rules of attraction, using comic book hero Scott Pilgrim as the protagonist of the talk – explaining why Scott's love of Ramona Flowers made perfect sense according to science.

First, Swami pointed to some early sociological research showing that a majority of people start relationships with those in close proximity. In fact, geographical proximity is one of the biggest predictors of forming a relationship. Even in the age of online dating, people still look for matches who are close by.

Second, just being familiar with something, or someone, Swami said was enough to make them more attractive. The 'mere exposure' effect shows we like things or people who are familiar. What about appearance? Although we know beautiful people are seen as better and have better chances at getting good jobs, getting paid more and generally being adored, it is not the most important factor in a relationship. In short-term sexual relationships, Swami said, it's a big factor, but those people looking for long-term partners are often seeking warmth, humour, understanding and kindness rather than attractiveness.

The third and final lesson for Scott Pilgrim was that 'birds of a feather flock together': many people say opposites attract, but there's actually little or no evidence of this in the literature. Swami left the audience with three general tips

for successful dating; be nice, don't send pictures of your genitals to other people (unless they ask) and, importantly, be kind to yourself.

Picture yourself floating above your bed, looking down on... yourself. The science behind out of body experiences (OBEs) and some lesser-known forms of so-called autoscopic phenomena were discussed in a fascinating lecture. Anglia Ruskin cognitive neuroscientist and psychology lecturer Dr Jane Aspell has explored the reasons some people have this experience and how it is linked in with the body-location information that our brain processes in one key area.

She gave examples of the most common OBE – usually a person will feel their self is no longer in their body, they will usually be lying down and can see their body. However, this can vary in surprising ways: Aspell gave one example of a lecturer who experienced an OBE while still delivering his lecture.

Although the samples of people used in experiments in the area are understandably small – it is after all a rare phenomenon – one finding that has persisted is abnormal function in the temporo parietal junction (TPJ), an area that seems to combine proprioceptive and vestibular information, which gives rise to our conscious experience of where the body is in space.

So what can OBEs tell us about our brains and experience of ourselves? Aspell said they show that our bodily self-consciousness has different components that can come apart when the TPJ is not functioning correctly. Aspell said the OBE is one of a number of autoscopic phenomena, which also include autoscopic hallucinations and heautoscopy. In the former a person will see a double of themselves appear but their sense of self will remain in their body. In heautoscopy, a condition which has been described as 'disturbing' by sufferers, a person will see their double, or even multiple doubles, and their sense of self can switch from their actual self to the double and back again, occasionally they may feel their self is located in both at the same time.

This 'existentially awful' experience, Aspell said, had driven several patients to commit or attempt suicide. She gave an example, reported by Wigan in 1884, of a man who could evoke his doppelgänger at will; this double eventually became



Out-of-body experience in Cambridge?

friendship, to discuss their potential future and troubled past. The play was interspersed with discussion led by Martina Di Simplicio, a psychiatrist and Career Development Fellow at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit working on mental imagery in bipolar disorder, whose research inspired the production (tinyurl.com/z2d8jkt).

Doctoral students at the unit Alex Lau-Zhu and Julie Ji, along with clinical psychologist Caitlin Hitchcock, discussed how mental images, rumination and other thinking biases can change the way we feel. Lau-Zhu spoke about studies that have shown that when processing the same written scenarios using mental imagery, as opposed to focusing on verbal meaning, one tends to report higher emotional impact, both for positive and negative scenarios. He added: 'Further, imagining from a first-person perspective has shown to produce more intense emotional responses than a third-person

more autonomous and would appear randomly to humiliate the man. He eventually shot himself.

But what do we know about what's happening in the brain? One patient with epilepsy had experienced episodes of heautoscopy since adolescence and happened to experience it while having an EEG scan – her double appeared during an epileptic seizure and

disappeared once it had subsided. Aspell explained heautoscopy was linked to abnormal activity in the TPJ and how it integrates information about the body within the world, including vestibular information.

As these are rare phenomena, Aspell has developed ways to study them in healthy participants. Using a camera placed behind a participant and a virtual

reality headset, subjects 'see' themselves standing in front of themselves. To increase the power of the illusion Aspell also measures participants' heart rate and places an aura of light around the 'double', which beats in time with the participants' heart. People in these conditions feel as if their self is outside of their body and that the virtual-reality body is their own.

WHERE TO START ON THE ROAD TO SUPERINTELLIGENT AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) has fascinated us for decades. From Isaac Asimov's famous *I, Robot* stories to more modern fiction like the film *Ex Machina*, the idea of creating sentient machines fills us with both delight and dread. But just how realistic is it? What challenges do we face on the road to superintelligent AI? Recently, as part of the Cambridge Science Festival, great minds from the fields of robotics, computing and neuroscience came together in front of a packed audience.

Taking to the stage were technology entrepreneur and founder of Acorn computers Dr Hermann Hauser; senior lecturer in the Computer Laboratory of the University of Cambridge, Dr Mateja Jamnik; head of the University of Cambridge Psychology Department, Professor Trevor Robbins; and co-founder of the Bristol Robotics Laboratory, Professor Alan Winfield. The discussion was ably chaired by BBC Radio 4's Tom Feilden. Interestingly, despite being organised by neuroscientist Professor Barbara Sahakian, the focus was very much on robotics and computer learning, with only Robbins to delve into the complexities of the human brain.

One major point that came across is how difficult it is to define intelligence, something psychologists are extremely familiar with. Interestingly, it has turned out to be much easier to develop computers that can pass what seem like extremely difficult cognitive challenges, like playing chess

or Go, than to develop machines that can execute seemingly simple tasks like picking up an egg. This highlights just how much we take for granted about our brains: the amazing interactions between our brain, senses and muscles that allow us to make the tiny adjustments needed.

Despite the hold-ups in terms of physical robotics, computer learning has come on dramatically in the last decade. Both Hausner and Jamnik put this down to three things – the improvement in machine-learning algorithms based on neural networks, the availability of cheap distributed computing power via cloud computing and the huge amounts of data now generated on a daily basis. These combine to allow us to teach computers rather than programming them, making them much more flexible and opening up the possibility for their intelligence to increase at

frighteningly rapid rates.

However, while these networks may be based on the neurons found in our brains, they are hugely simplified, and far less efficient than we are at learning.

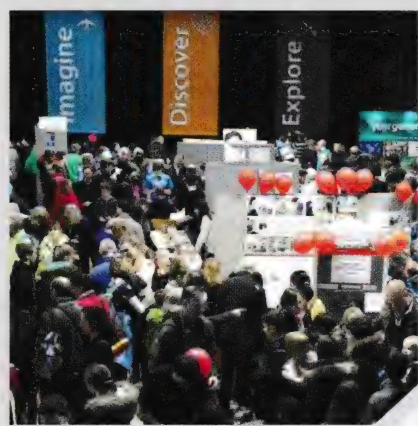
So what is it about human learning that makes it so efficient? Robbins explained that unlike machine learning, human learning isn't done passively. Shared attention, imitation and social learning are all intertwined with how we learn language and skills: something that will be extremely difficult to replicate in computers. But maybe we won't need to. The amount of available data is only going to increase over the next decade, so it may be that the inefficiencies of requiring huge training sets to learn concepts won't be a problem. And as computing power increases, speed isn't likely to be an issue for long either.

But is modelling the human brain really the best way to create AI? One project that Winfield is working on aims to endow robots with 'theory of mind' – something that is vital for them to be able to interact with humans in the real world. His research is based on simulation theory, which suggests that we run possible outcomes in our brains in order to predict the consequences. To model this, Winfield has created robots

with internal simulations including themselves, their environments and other robots in the area. They are programmed to be ethical and prevent harm to the other robots, so will delay achieving their goal to intervene if they see or predict that another robot is about to do something dangerous. This is a fascinating development, but raises some interesting ethical questions – particularly as Winfield freely admits the robots could be made unethical simply by changing a single line of code!

On the topic of ethics, the panel was curiously quiet. The ethical questions are, in my opinion, some of the most important and difficult to answer. I have no doubt that with the rate of technological advance we will, at some point, develop superintelligent computers and functioning robots that will become as ubiquitous as computers and mobile phones. But what happens then? Who is to blame if your driverless car malfunctions and hits a pedestrian while you are napping in the front seat? What is to stop someone hacking your robot-butler to help them steal your belongings? And eventually, will it be ethical, or even possible, to keep robots subservient if they do develop consciousness and emotions? These are the problems that we will need to grapple with as the inevitable happens and machines become even more a part of our daily lives. I, for one, don't have a clue where to start.

I By Ginny Smith, a freelance science communicator



Exploring at Cambridge Science Festival

'Be the grit in the oyster'

Ella Rhodes reports from the Division of Clinical Psychology Pre-Qualification Group Annual Conference

There was a hint of revolution in the air among the pre-qualified psychologists who joined together to hear more about community psychology, with the conference set around the theme 'Thinking more, speaking more, doing more'.

Lisa Cameron MP, a former clinical psychologist and chair of the All-Party Group on Disability, delivered a message of hope and suggested psychologists were 'pushing at an open door' in terms of their ability to get involved with the workings of government and have impact on policy. She described psychologists as 'true public servants' and emphasised the importance of mental health being given parity of esteem with physical health.

During her next four years in Parliament, Cameron added, she planned to work closely with the British Psychological Society. She hoped that psychologists and their research would be involved in policy in the future, and she encouraged the audience to get involved in Parliament through internships or visits. She told the gathered psychologists, trainees and undergraduates that they had excellent skills that could be used in areas of service to the public.

When asked how psychologists can become more involved in policy decisions, Cameron suggested they use social media to their advantage, and make note of areas of importance, even on a local level, and contact their MPs. She added that working from the ground up could eventually help to feeding into policy making. Psychologists' evidence-based practice was fundamental and should also be central to government policy. Cameron concluded that psychologists should be placing themselves at the forefront of policy decisions through involvement in policy groups, through links to Parliament or by holding more events in Parliament.

President of the BPS Jamie Hacker Hughes encouraged the audience to find their voices – whether this be through social or traditional media. He said if they had something they wanted to say or a cause they wished to tackle, there were ways of doing it. Speaking of some of his recent work as President, including setting up a task force for asylum seekers and refugees as well as launching a campaign regarding work capability assessments, he said: 'As psychologists I'd say it's our professional duty to speak more and to do

more. There are many ways community psychology can communicate – by participating in social action, speaking the truth to power, speaking out against injustice.'

Nina Browne a third-year clinical psychology trainee, and Senior Clinical Tutor, Dr Kat Alcock (both from UCL) spoke about their fascinating work interviewing psychologists who actively engage with policy. They gave a brief history on public health inequalities, including mention of the 2010 Marmot review and the UCL Institute of Health Equity study in 2014, which looked into inequalities in physical and mental health as well as the social inequalities at the root of these problems.

But, Browne and Alcock asked, what can psychologists do about social deprivation, and who is already doing this kind of work? For her thesis project Browne carried out interviews with 35 clinical psychologists working in policy or engaging in policy work. Policy, Browne pointed out, can be at the local level, in an NHS trust, Department of Health or even at an international level. A thematic analysis of the interviews is ongoing, but Browne and Alcock shared some of the themes emerging so far. There was a general feeling of frustration among clinical psychologists that the field focused on individuals, often without



considering external or societal influences on mental health. Some of the key processes in their policy work involved forming good relationships with colleagues and those outside of psychology – many people mentioned these relationships helping them to have more influence. Taking risks or accepting opportunities also emerged as a key theme – whether this be involvement with the BPS [e-mail policy@bps.org.uk to express interest] or putting themselves forward for other responsibilities, as a group these psychologists tended to take risks, speak out and stand up. Also important were the understanding of organisations and their structures as well as developing personal and professional skills and competencies.

What were some of the barriers and facilitators to policy work? The agendas and timescales of policy makers themselves can be a barrier to effecting change, whereas having a mentor or people that share your views can be a huge help. Browne and Alcock concluded by encouraging people to get out of 'one-to-one' appointments and experience



Members of Psychologists Against Austerity, Edward Mundy, Rachel Tribe, Sinead Peacock-Brennan and Christopher Jones, held a workshop

society – placements for trainee psychologists in public health or government may be useful in helping to understand the wider contexts of treatment.

Clinical psychologist and blogger Dr Masuma Rahim gave a stirring keynote address pointing to the system of clinical psychology as part of the problem with regard to community psychology. She said from her first job upon qualifying she realised there was something wrong with the system – the field had never focused on prevention of mental health problems in any large-scale way. Rahim painted a picture of psychologists having to battle to give people treatment as resources are stretched so thin. She gave the example of people with eating disorders who may be turned away from treatment for 'not being thin enough': 'You are left almost wanting them to get more ill to prove how desperate they are for your help. What kind of a system is that?'

Rahim said younger psychologists are often great at questioning the status quo, as they may be less disillusioned with the profession. She said: 'There are a lot of us, what could we do if we got out of our world and into other people's?' As someone who had used mental health services herself, Rahim said that in the current political and economic climate it was more important than ever that people challenge inequalities and societal issues. 'The health and social care system we have was set up because there was a will and a spirit to do things better. Those principles are being stamped upon every single day. People who need the most help are getting less and less and it's not going to get any better.' It is not enough to carry out one's day job and do nothing more, Rahim urged. She encouraged the audience to speak about the issues that bother them, speak to their supervisors about them, and consider doing work with the media. She said: 'Be troublemakers. Be the grit in the oyster, it's the troublemakers that change things.'

A fascinating session was held by the London Playback Theatre group. This form of theatre sees the audience's

feelings, stories and experiences improvised through movement and music by a small group of performers. Leader of the group Veronica Needa asked the audience themes and stand-out words and messages from the conference and improvised movement and short plays around these ideas. The group of four performers along with a musician left many in the audience stunned by the emotion conveyed in their short plays. The performers were largely from social care, psychological or therapeutic backgrounds, and they demonstrated that sharing stories and seeing them acted out in very imaginative ways could be a deeply moving experience.

Members of Psychologists Against Austerity, Edward Mundy, Rachel Tribe, Sinead Peacock-Brennan and Christopher Jones, held a workshop giving information about their own activism as well as tips for those psychologists who hope to make a larger difference with their work. They pointed to evidence showing the damaging effects of austerity – particularly on already deprived and disadvantaged groups. The group's briefing paper, *The Psychological Impact of Austerity*, outlined five 'Austerity Ailments' – experiences that they argue have increased due to government cuts and that lead to mental distress; namely, increasing levels of fear and mistrust, humiliation and shame, instability and insecurity, and isolation and loneliness, and experiences of feeling trapped and powerless. The group argue instead for policies that promote agency, security, connection, trust and meaning.

Following group discussion on the contribution psychologists could make to key societal issues, the conference closed with a panel and Q&A session featuring input from BPS President Elect Peter Kinderman, Anne Cooke (Canterbury Christ Church University), psychology undergraduate student Stephanie Allan (who experienced a psychotic episode in 2010), newly qualified clinical psychologist Sam Thompson and Gemma Budge, a trainee psychologist from the University of Plymouth.

A HUB TO CHALLENGE MISCONCEPTIONS COLLABORATIVELY

A group exploring dementia and the arts has been invited to take up the 2016–2018 residency in The Hub at London's Wellcome Collection, a space for interdisciplinary projects exploring health and wellbeing. The group aims to examine and challenge perceptions of dementia through scientific and creative experimentation with the help of £1 million funding to develop the project over two academic years.

This group will be the second to take up the space following in the footsteps of 'Hubbub', which explored rest and busyness in the modern world. The new group will be led by Sebastian Crutch (neuropsychologist at the UCL Dementia Research Centre) and Caroline Evans; they will be joined by a team that includes science writer Philip Ball, visual artist Charlie Murphy and BBC medical correspondent Fergus Walsh.

Inspiration for the project came from the experiences, questions and uncertainties of people living with dementia. The group aims to challenge common misconceptions of dementia through artistic and scientific investigation of less recognised symptoms associated with typical and rare dementias. The team also hope to enrich understanding about dementia by raising provocative questions about the healthy brain, our emotional reactions to change in ourselves and others, and the attributes by which we value and define humanity.

The Hub space at Wellcome Collection will provide a base for the group, starting in October, to perform creative research and to stage scientific and artistic experiments, data-gathering and public events. The group will also have access to resources in Wellcome Collection, the Wellcome Trust and the Wellcome Library.

Dr Crutch, Project Director, said: 'We are thrilled to have the opportunity to bring together people from so many different disciplines and backgrounds to engage in a practical and authentic piece of interdisciplinary research. This project was spurred by hundreds of conversations with people living with different forms of dementia, and it is only by developing, deepening and broadening those conversations that we can achieve our goal of delivering novel toolkits, methodologies and ways of thinking to enable us to better understand and use the arts in dementia.' **ER**

IN THE PSYCHOLOGIST APP

To mark World Autism Awareness Day on 2 April 2016, we released a free edition in our new app. As well as revisiting our October 2014 special and other archive content, we heard from leading researcher Professor Sir Michael Rutter and parent/disability equality consultant Graham Findlay on what we should be 'aware' of on World Autism Awareness Day.

If you haven't downloaded the app yet, search your iOS or Android store or follow the links via tinyurl.com/psychmagapp

Psychology Research Day

More than 100 young academics, many of them students, gathered at the first ever Psychology Research Day at London's Senate House to learn about research skills and resources. The event, organised jointly by the British Psychological Society and Senate House Library, featured panel discussions, one-on-one advice sessions and exhibition stands, including a range of BPS teams and networks that support research. The BPS journal publishers Wiley contributed with their own stand and by sponsoring refreshments and a lunch.

In the first panel discussion Ian Smith, a Senior Journals Publishing Manager at Wiley, was joined by Professor Patrick Leman (King's College, University of London) to give some tips on what the publishing process involves, and how to catch an editor's eye. Smith ran through

the basic submission and peer-review process and gave some information about the 11 BPS journals which are available to 8000 institutions throughout the world. He also spoke about altmetrics and the increasing popularity of open access publishing.

Leman then gave some examples from his time as editor of the *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*. He advised the students that if their paper failed to be submitted for review this often meant they had chosen the wrong journal for their work. He advised that people should check what a certain journal has published before, potentially its mission statement, what sort of work is current in the area – which could reveal who a potential reviewer may be. He said good papers have several key features – quality science, innovative and original work, making a distinctive contribution, and correctly formatted and well-written.

Expanding on each of these Leman said 'good science' should include a good thorough literature review, a clear line of argument, hypothesis and research question, good population sampling – taking into account representativeness and diversity, it should also be ethical and the statistical analysis should be appropriate and conclusions should follow naturally from these. Leman said new research

should present a new idea, something that 'plugs a gap in the market'. It should be topical and something that fits with recent debates either socially or within the field.

As Leman himself has only ever had one paper which was accepted straight away he explained that students should steel themselves against rejection and aim to take reviewers' comments on board. He pointed out that reviewers have sacrificed their time to look through a paper and thus their comments should be noted, replied to and addressed where appropriate. He gave some parting words of advice on 'revise and re-submit' papers – not to leave those changes to the last minute, to ask people to read through the work and feed back, and not to bounce a paper from one journal rejection to another.

Using libraries for research was next up for discussion. First Thomas Baldwin, Executive Manager of the M25 consortium, gave a talk about the group which helps students access library resources within academic and other libraries in the M25 region and beyond. John Woodcock (King's College London), Library Learning and Teaching Manager, spoke out against Google Scholar and gave ideas of better, more efficient literature searching techniques. Woodcock said Google may not be the best tool for academic literature searches as it is unclear how the algorithm works, it provides personalised results based on past browsing and its results also include non-peer-reviewed content. He gave some suggestions of potentially more useful searching tools, including PubMed and Medline. Another useful tool he pointed to was ETHoS, provided by the British Library, which consists of a searchable database of doctoral theses. He added the NICE evidence search was useful for clinicians. He also pointed to the Cochrane Library for finding systematic reviews and suggested that many universities have open-access repositories for research done at given institutions.

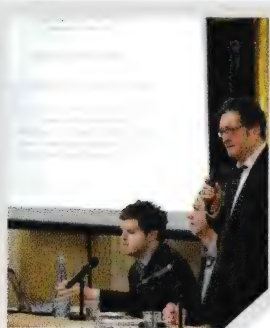
Ross MacFarlane (Research Engagement Officer, Wellcome Library) took the audience through a whistle-stop tour of some of the psychology-related special collections held at the recently-refurbished Wellcome Library in London. These include the papers of Charles Spearman, Henry Tajfel, Charlotte Wolff and Edward Tolman. Fascinatingly the library now also holds the dream diaries of World War II PoWs compiled by Major Kenneth Hopkins.

Finally Rowena Macrae-Gibson (Head of Library Academic Services, Brunel University London) kicked off the last panel discussion around research with digital resources – her talk discussed what it meant to be a digitally literate researcher: a human right, she said, and a particularly important skill to have as a researcher in the current academic world. She emphasised the importance of using digital tools in modern research – including resources such as Dropbox and reference management tools such as Mendeley and Evernote.

Macrae-Gibson also spoke about the need to communicate research outside of academic circles. She said being digitally literate involves communication of one's work and suggested that researchers should obtain an ORCID ID – a digital identifying number which makes work traceable even if a person moves institution or changes their name. She stressed the importance of establishing a research identity online, both through social media and within academic circles. Having more of an online presence, she suggested, may also mean the ability to better track and modify what information about you exists in the online world. Macrae-Gibson noted Twitter and LinkedIn as particularly useful tools for networking and raising one's profile.

Paul Horsler, Academic Support Librarian and PhD student (London School of Economics), gave his view on some of his favourite reference management systems including Endnote and Mendeley and gave the pros and cons of some of the most popular software. Finally Evangelia Lipitakis from Thomson Reuters gave a talk on the benefits of using Web of Science for research which allows users to search academic literature by a huge number of criteria – including institution, number of citations, and allows reverse searches to find articles which cited a given paper.

Peter Dillon-Hooper (BPS Academic Resources Manager) said: 'The idea for this day came out of a discussions with the senior management of Senate House Library last summer. It has been rewarding seeing that idea come to fruition through the hard work of a handful of people – they know who they are. Thanks also to all who took part, but particular thanks should go to Mura Ghosh, the Psychology Research Librarian at Senate House Library. We have learnt a lot, the feedback has been wholly positive and we intend to do it again next year.' ■



Hostage-support network

A charity that supports hostages and their families has put out a call for psychologists, who are experienced in working with trauma, to join their network of volunteer therapists. Director of Hostage UK, Rachel Briggs OBE (pictured), spoke to us about an increasing need for specialist psychologists to offer their support to a group of people with very complex needs.

Currently, Briggs said, the charity has a small team of psychologists and psychiatrists who give their time to families and hostages free of charge. However, she added, the number of kidnappings the group is dealing with has risen. She said: 'I think this is partly because the kidnapping of Brits around the world is going up and getting more complicated, potentially because of the number of high-profile kidnapping incidents in recent years. But also because our profile is rising and families know we're there to help them. We're keen to find wonderful, talented, experienced individuals who are psychologists but have a particular interest and expertise in trauma.'

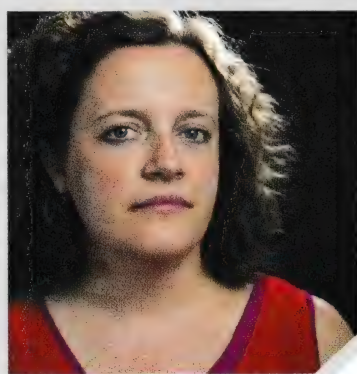
The families of those who have been taken hostage and hostages themselves have a very complex and unique set of needs, Briggs explained: 'Families are scared and for prolonged periods may not know if their loved one is alive or dead. Kidnappers often cease communication for months at a time as part of their communication strategy to really ramp up the pressure. Families are often very isolated – because of the secrecy that's often necessary in most kidnapping cases. Then this is all compounded by the fact families often stop looking after themselves; they have chronic lack of sleep over months or even

years. All the things which are important to keep the body and mind healthy slip by the wayside. When hostages return, and most do, thankfully, they're traumatised in a different way – you have the challenge of bringing the hostage and family together, both who have been through their own traumas but in a very different way.'

The charity, Briggs said, aimed to create the UK's first network of hostage and trauma experts, not only to help families and returning hostages but also to develop a community of best practice in these cases. She said: 'There are relatively few psychologists who have experience in this area. We're keen to bring those people together to increase our understanding of the psychological impacts of hostage-taking on families and hostages.'

Briggs was also keen to point out that time commitments for this sort of work are quite small: luckily kidnapping is still a relatively rare crime. If a psychologist has the family of a hostage in their area they may be required to offer around one hour a week or one hour a fortnight while that family requires support, but they may go six months or a year without being involved with any cases.

If you would be interested in volunteering visit hostageuk.org learn more about the charity and e-mail Coordinator Mags Heaton on mags@hostageuk.org for information about how to get involved. Psychologists will be invited to all Hostage UK's seminars and will be given a training day at least once a year. **ER**



Biggest Bang yet

This year was the busiest yet for the British Psychological Society Stand at the Big Bang Fair. The Fair, which is one of the largest celebrations of science, technology, engineering and maths of its kind in Europe, brings together children and young people from across the UK to get hands-on with STEM.

The British Psychological Society stand hosted colleagues from Aston University, University of Derby, University of Nottingham, Staffordshire University and the University of Warwick, all delivering high-quality psychology demonstrations to thousands of children across the four days of the fair. Dr Liz Blagrove, from the University of Warwick, said: 'It is always

a privilege for Warwick Psychology to be involved with the BPS at the Big Bang Fair. So much passion and expertise in psychological science, coupled with the commitment to communicate this to the next generation of psychologists.'

The stand saw in excess of 10,000 individuals taking part in psychological demonstrations, run by our volunteers. Kevin Silber from the University of Derby recognised the benefit to his students: 'Some of those who volunteer might start their shift quite timid and overwhelmed by the numbers of children passing though. However, they soon get involved and by the end of a few hours they are exuding

confidence in what they are doing.'

Kelly Auty, Policy Advisor to the Society's Education and Public Engagement Board, praised the universities that took part, highlighting that 'co-ordinating over 70 volunteers to deliver the demonstrations over the course of the fair is no small feat, and our university partner leads put in an enormous amount of work to recruit and organise their staff and students to volunteer and to build on what they have to offer year on year. We owe the success of the BPS stand to them and they all do a great job communicating psychology to large numbers of people. We are all exhausted by the end of the Fair and we

are just so grateful to our university partners for supporting our efforts to get psychology out there to children and young people and, just as importantly, their teachers and parents.'

The hard work all seemed worth it as Dr Roger Newport from the University of Nottingham, whose team demonstrated over 7000 illusions over the course of the fair, points out: 'The BPS stand was by far the busiest stand as word of mouth spread and people arrived saying they had been told they simply had to come and see what we had to offer. To do this in an environment designed around what science has to offer feels like an incredible achievement.'

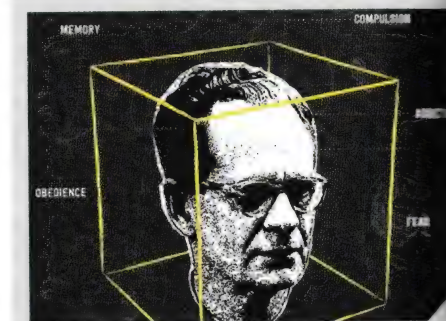
Opening Skinner's Box

A play that explores 10 of psychology's most famous experiments has its premiere in April (we hope to review it in the June issue). *Opening Skinner's Box* adapted by the theatre company Improbable is based on Lauren Slater's book of the same name and directed by Phelim McDermott and Lee Simpson, co-founders of the company.

Improbable, a theatre company that uses improvisation in the development of its work, has sought advice on the scientific method from Dr John Lazarus and Dr Quoc Vuong from the University of Newcastle's Institute of Neuroscience, and Dr Edmund Ramsden, a scientific historian based at Queen Mary University. The play will explore B.F. Skinner's experiments, Stanley Milgram's work on obedience to authority, Elizabeth Loftus's experiments and others.

Vuong told us that he and Lazarus had been involved throughout the development and rehearsals, a process he said was 'fascinating'. 'The idea was for us to watch them rehearse and interact with the actors. It was nice to learn about the techniques they use, and you could see parallels between theatre and research. The actors asked us about science, what it is, what a scientist does we tried to give them a sense of the scientific process to understand the 10 experiments in the book; about the interpretation of findings from experiments, and the systematic manipulation of variables to see if it has an impact on behaviour, emotions or memories.'

Vuong said working with Improbable had given him ideas for future research: 'We've been discussing how we investigate



the improvisation process itself. I want to run experiments on what's happening in the brains of actors during improvisation using fNIRS. Similar things have been done in jazz musicians and rappers, so it would be a nice complement to those,' he said. **ER**

I *Opening Skinner's Box* is showing at the following places and times: 22 to 30 April, Northern Stage, Newcastle; 5 to 14 May, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds; 20 to 21 May, Bristol Old Vic Theatre, Bristol. For more information and to book see tinyurl.com/gq5v474

Sweet move in obesity policy

Drinks that are high in sugar are to be taxed as part of the government's strategy to tackle obesity. The tax will come into effect in April 2018; drinks with more than 5g of sugar per

solutions to society's problems, taxes can play a role in behavioural change. The authors wrote that the levy will have a greater impact if the additional cost of sugary drinks is passed on to consumers, especially where there is a diet / zero-sugar alternative available. They added: 'It will also have a bigger impact if producers and retailers shift their marketing budgets to products lower in sugar, where they will in future likely enjoy higher margins.'

The authors added: 'Research has shown that consumers underreact to taxes that are not salient. In one study by Raj Chetty in the US, posting tax-inclusive prices reduced demand by 8 per cent, even though the same price was paid whether the tax was highlighted or not. In other words, if cans of cola are clearly marked as being higher in price because of the levy, this may lead to a greater effect on behaviour.'

The authors also point to evidence that the effect of taxes on consumption may be disproportionately larger above a certain threshold. They

modelled these effects and found that a 12 per cent price increase leads to a steeper reduction in calories consumed – this relies on the assumption that the price increase is passed on to consumers.

The full government 'obesity strategy' is set to be released in the summer, and we asked Professor in Health Psychology Jane Ogden (University of Surrey, pictured left), who has worked extensively in the field of obesity, to share her thoughts on the new tax and potential approaches the government could take. She said over the last 30 years individuals had been the focus of obesity prevention and treatment with an emphasis on how individuals think and behave in order to change their diet and exercise habits. Slowly, policymakers and psychologists are beginning to realise that these problems occur on a societal level: 'It's becoming increasingly obvious that people can't make healthy choices in a world that encourages them to behave in an unhealthy way. At last experts are beginning to

recognise you need to change the environment in which we live including the food industry, ranging from catering to food production and marketing and urban planning,' Professor Ogden said.

Ogden added that the food industry, major employers, schools and universities would be good places to start in combatting rising levels of obesity. But from a psychological perspective she said it would still be useful to focus on individuals: 'The emphasis has to be on structural, social and environmental change but as psychologists we still have a role to play as all those in charge of those industries and organisations are still individuals who have their own beliefs and behaviours which impact upon the environment of others. Therefore an interesting way forward for psychologists would be to use our psychological skills to change the beliefs and behaviours of the people in charge of our environment as a means to encourage others to make healthier choices.' **ER**



100ml will face a levy, while a higher tax will be placed on those with more than 8g.

In an online article, the government's Behavioural Insights Team, or 'nudge unit', wrote about the potential impacts of a sugar tax on consumer behaviour. Hugo Harper, Luke Ravenscroft and Owain Service pointed out that while the team is usually more concerned with implementing simple, non-regulatory

Psychology at the forefront in book prize shortlist

The shortlist for the Wellcome Book Prize 2016 was announced in March, with a strong psychological theme again running through the nominations. Celebrating the best new books that engage with any aspect of medicine, health or illness, Wellcome said that the 2016 shortlist 'showcases the breadth and depth of our encounters with medicine through six exceptional works of fiction and non-fiction': *The Outrun* by Amy Liptrot (Canongate), *Signs for Lost Children* by Sarah Moss (Granta), *It's All in Your Head* by Suzanne O'Sullivan (Chatto & Windus), *The Last Act of Love* by Cathy Rentzenbrink (Picador), *Neurotribes* by Steve Silberman (Allen & Unwin) and *Playthings* by Alex Pheby (Galley Beggar Press: see our exclusive article at <https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/schreber-plaything>).

From memoirs on addiction (*The Outrun*) and on the aftermath of a debilitating accident (*The Last Act of Love*) to studies on autism (*Neurotribes*) and psychosomatic illnesses (*It's All in Your Head*), the non-fiction contenders reflect a broader preoccupation with the human mind, while the two works of fiction on the list comprise an immersive account of schizophrenia (*Playthings*) and an account of the pioneering

work of an early female medic (*Signs for Lost Children*).

Worth £30,000, the 2016 prize is judged by a panel comprising chair Joan Bakewell; Frances Balkwill OBE, Professor of Cancer Biology at Barts Cancer Institute and an author of science books for children; writer, columnist and salonnière, Damian Barr; award-winning journalist and author, Sathnam Sanghera; and award-winning novelist, Tessa Hadley, who has exclusively provided her thoughts on the shortlist for us below.

Joan Bakewell said: 'All the judges were engrossed by the range of books we had to consider: we each learned important things from the imaginative and inspiring way writers have addressed their subjects. It has been an exhilarating journey. The shortlist reflects what has moved and inspired us most about books that deal with intimate and often complex matters of the human body and human experience. Each one has found its way not just onto the shortlist, but into our hearts.'

Last year's prize was awarded to Marion Coutts for her critically lauded memoir *The Iceberg*. One of the other shortlisted authors, Henry Marsh, wrote for us on psychology and his work as a brain surgeon.

Tessa Hadley on the Wellcome Book Prize 2016, for *The Psychologist*

All the titles on our shortlist for the Wellcome Book Prize seem to raise issues of interest to psychologists. What constitutes a self, for instance? How can the powerful, talented young woman in *The Outrun* be at the mercy of her compulsion to drink, why doesn't she just 'know better'? When she's sober, how should she acknowledge that other part of herself, the self-destructive drunk, still there as a potential somewhere inside her? And where does a self end? Is Cathy Rentzenbrink's brother still himself after the terrible accident in *The Last Act of Love*? All the

personality and temperament and forms of behaviour that made him recognisable and that his family once loved him for are lost, and only his physical body remains - yet they can't just put an end to loving him.

What does it mean when a given culture sets about distinguishing sanity from madness? In Sarah Moss's novel *Signs for Lost Children* the women patients in an insane asylum certainly seem to see things that aren't there, and they can't cope with their normal lives: but the novel makes us question whether what's outside the asylum is any more 'normal'. Studying the history of the diagnosis of autism in *Neurotribes*, we see how our categories of interpretation of mental 'illness' and 'disease' are historically and culturally produced, even if they do also relate to real things in the world.

There's no impersonal advance of pure scientific insight; the story of autism reads more like a novel, with a vivid cast of characters, power struggles, obsessions - and heroic efforts of insight.

I suppose it's true that all of the shortlisted books are about suffering - which is perhaps the deepest point intersection of mind and body, the place where we can't escape from ourselves. Suzanne O'Sullivan in her study of psychosomatic disorders, *It's All in Your Head*, makes it clear what slippery categories 'mind' and 'body' are, and how it's impossible to separate out mind-pain from body-pain with any confident empirical certainty. But saying that these books all about suffering makes them sound dismal and sermonising and not much fun: nothing could be further from the truth (we weeded out the dismal ones!) Good writing itself is a manifestation of mind in words, needless to say - it's the writers' wit and irony, their intelligence and control, which make for a reader's pleasure in all six books. Alex Pheby's novel *Playthings*, about one of Freud's patients, takes us inside the experience of delusion, turning perception upside down - but the results are darkly comical as well as tragic.

We're trained in uncertainty these days, in our culture without fixed religious or political convictions, lacking the large confidence of the past. I suppose it's inevitable that in an era of doubt writers will turn a fascinated gaze inwards, asking how we know what we think we know, how we know what we feel, and what it means to try writing about these things, tracing mental maps of our experience in words.



Tessa Hadley is the author of four novels (*Accidents in the Home*, *Everything Will Be All Right*, *The Master Bedroom* and *The London Train*), and two collections of short stories, *Sunstroke* and *Married Love*. She teaches literature and creative writing at Bath Spa University.

MORE ONLINE...

...including a report from the joint conference of the British Psychological Society's History and Philosophy of Psychology Section and the Critical Psychiatry Network, and the 60th Anniversary Annual Conference of the Society's Northern Ireland Branch.

Inside the mind of an ultra-runner – the tougher it gets, the more fun it is

According to *UltraRunning Magazine*, an ultra-run is anything longer than a standard marathon of 26 miles, but it's not unusual for people to participate in gruelling runs that take place in punishing environments over days or even weeks. For people who struggle to run to catch a bus, the idea of deliberately putting yourself through this kind of physical punishment, for fun, seems little short of crazy. Yet this is a sport that's on the increase – the number of official events has doubled in the last decade.

Exercise-related distress was once seen as a simple consequence of physical symptoms like metabolic discharge building up in the muscles. But we now understand that the mind plays an important role in deciding whether a symptom is acceptable or unbearable. It's this that makes ultra-runners possible. In fact, a new in-depth case study of an ultra-runner published in the *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* finds that with greater physical exertion comes the experience of ever more positive emotion.

The profiled runner is an unnamed woman who was new to ultra-running but had a pedigree of elite-level running in international marathons. The researchers, led by Urban Johnson at Halmstad University, examined her experiences during a 10-week run in late spring covering 3641 kilometres (2262 miles) across Europe. The route included flats and substantial rises, passing through mountain ranges such as the Pyrenees. She and her experienced running partner covered between 26 and 80 kilometres each day, typically running between five and eight hours, taking turns to push a baby buggy holding their equipment. In case it's not obvious... that's a lot of running.

After the run, the researchers interviewed the runner to understand what she perceived as the mental qualities that made for ultra success. She revealed four key factors: mental stamina;

motivation to test one's limits, a will that's generated by the enjoyable features of the journey; a sense of camaraderie with the partner; and self-awareness. As an example of the last factor, the running pair formalised a rule to communicate to teach other whenever they felt even a twinge of pain so that it could be immediately addressed: a 'not one step further' rule. In addition, the pair did not run to targets, covering as much distance as felt comfortable day to day.

The ultra-runner also made a weekly record of her mood and exertion levels, starting three weeks prior to the run and ending three weeks after its completion. The researchers were interested in finding out from these records whether the physical impact of intensive running would produce psychological stress even in the absence of competition or targets.

During the run, the more physical exertion the runner experienced, the more her positive mood intensified. There was only one dip in positive mood during the run and this occurred during a two-week period where the close running dynamic was disrupted by the temporary participation of a third runner. Meanwhile, a measure of more negative mood states found no significant difference due to exertion, nor any differences inside or outside of the run period. So for this runner, no, intensive running was not psychologically stressful, but rather rewarding. It was only after the run was over that our ultra-runner experienced a drop in feelings of vitality, harmony and appreciation from others, as she came down from her remarkable trip.

This case study provides insight into a person doing exceptional things, with particular drives: as the authors note drily, 'the runner enjoys running!'. But her breakdown of the key psychological ingredients for success in intense endeavours may resonate with you, whether you climb, act or are founding a business. AF



In *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*

Why narcissistic leaders are like chocolate cake

In *Journal of Personality*

At a superficial level, people who are narcissistic seem like they will be good leaders. They're confident, outgoing and unafraid of putting themselves forward. But once in charge, their appeal rapidly wanes. In this way, say the authors of a new paper in the *Journal of Personality*, they are rather like chocolate cake:

'The first bite of chocolate cake is usually rich in flavor and texture, and extremely gratifying. After a while, however, the richness of this flavor makes one feel increasingly nauseous. Being led by a narcissist could be a similar experience.'

Supporting their chocolate cake model, the researchers recruited 142 unacquainted students to take part in weekly group tasks. Through the course

of the study, the students rated each other's leadership skills. High scorers in narcissism attracted positive leadership ratings from their peers early on, but this positive impression faded. The deteriorating perception of narcissists over time was partly explained by their lack of so-called 'transformational leadership skills' becoming apparent – that is, their inability to motivate and inspire others. A second study was similar but involved students who already knew each other. In this case, the narcissists did not receive positive leadership ratings from the outset – there was no honeymoon period for them – and as the study went on, they received more negative



ratings from their peers.

Taken together, the findings of the two studies are consistent with the chocolate cake model and demonstrate that initial

positive peer perceptions of narcissistic leadership fade over time, and eventually become negative,' the researchers concluded. CJ

How trustworthy is the data that psychologists collect online?

In *Computers in Human Behavior*

The internet has changed the way that many psychologists collect their data. It's now cheap and easy to recruit hundreds of people to complete questionnaires and tests online, for example through Amazon's Mechanical Turk website. This is a good thing in terms of reducing the dependence on student samples, but there are concerns about the quality of data collected through websites. For example, how do researchers know that the participants have read the questions properly or that they weren't watching TV at the same time as they completed the study?

Good news about the quality of online psychology data comes from a new paper in *Computers in Human Behavior*. Sarah Ramsey and her colleagues at Northern Illinois University first asked hundreds of university students to complete two questionnaires on computer – half of them did this on campus in the presence of a researcher, the others did it remotely, off campus.

The questions were about a whole range of topics from sex to coffee. The researchers started off leading the participants to believe they were really interested in their attitudes to these topics. But when the students started the second questionnaire they were told the real test was to spot how many of

the questions on the second questionnaire were repeats from the first. The idea was to see whether the students had really been paying attention to the questions – if they hadn't, they wouldn't be very good at spotting duplicates in the second questionnaire.

In fact, both groups of students – those supervised on campus and those who could do the questionnaire anywhere – performed well at spotting when questions were repeated. This suggests that even those who had completed the questionnaires at home, or out and about, had been paying attention – good news for any researchers who like to collect data online.

A follow-up study was similar, but this time there were three participant groups: students on-campus, students off-campus, and 246 people recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Also, the researchers added a trick to see if the participants had read the questionnaire instructions properly – they did this by making an unusual request for how participants should indicate the time they completed the questionnaires.

In terms of the participants' paying attention to the questionnaire items, the results were again promising – all groups did well at spotting duplicate items. Regarding the reading of instructions, the

results were more disappointing in general, but actually the Turkers performed the best. Just under 15 per cent of students on-campus appeared to have read the instructions closely compared with 8.5 per cent of off-campus students and 49.6 per cent of Turkers. Perhaps users of sites like Amazon's Mechanical Turk are actually more motivated to pay attention than students because they have an inherent interest in participating whereas students might just be fulfilling their course requirements.

Of course this paper has only looked at two specific aspects of conducting psychology research online, both relating to the use of questionnaires. However, the researchers were relatively upbeat – 'These results should increase our confidence in data provided by crowdsourced participants [those recruited via Amazon and other sites]' they said. But they also added that their findings raise general concerns about how closely participants read task instructions. There are easy ways round this though – for example, instructions can include a compliance test that must be completed before the proper questionnaire or other task begins, or researchers could try using audio to provide spoken instructions. CJ

Can psychosocial interventions extend the lives of cancer patients?

In *Psychology and Health*

The idea that prolonged stress is bad for your health is uncontroversial. And few things can be more stressful than receiving a cancer diagnosis and undergoing treatment. It makes sense, then, to consider that psychological interventions, aimed at providing cancer patients with emotional support and guidance on coping, might be beneficial. However, this is a delicate, controversial topic.

Not only is the evidence for the benefits of psychosocial interventions extremely mixed, but some cancer patients and their relatives have understandably railed against the 'cruel' suggestion that they might live longer if only they looked on the bright side and didn't get so stressed.

It's against this background that researchers in South Korea have conducted a new review of the effects of psychological interventions on cancer patients' survival time. Their study published in *Psychology and Health* is a meta-analysis, which means that they have combined the results from prior research to get an overview of the current evidence base.

The researchers, led by P.J. Oh at Sahmyook University, found over 4000 studies that looked promising, published between 1966

and 2014. However, once the researchers included only those papers that were randomised controlled trials and that included interventions delivered by professionals and had data on patient survival times, they were left with just 15 suitable studies conducted in five different countries and involving a total of 2940 participants with an average age of 52 years. The studies involved different types of intervention including psychoeducational programmes, CBT and supportive-expressive groups (a form of psychodynamic psychotherapy). The patients in the studies had a range of different cancers at different stages, including breast cancer, gastrointestinal cancer and melanoma.

Looking at all the data from all 15 studies, there was no evidence that psychosocial interventions prolong the lives of cancer patients. However, because of the huge variation between the studies in terms of the interventions and the types of patient, the researchers also broke down the evidence into subcategories and here the picture was more promising. For example, by excluding six studies that had exclusively involved patients with late-stage cancer, the researchers found that psychosocial interventions reduced the likelihood of patients dying during the course of the study (follow-up times varied from one to 12 years) by 27 per cent, on average. 'Stress reduction, if that is the causal mechanism, may have to occur earlier to achieve positive results,' the researchers said.

Other details to emerge included the finding that a positive benefit of psychosocial interventions was only apparent for studies involving patients with gastrointestinal cancer, although there was too little data to speculate as to whether this finding is meaningful or a chance result. Comparing the different types of intervention, the strongest positive evidence was for one-on-one programmes compared with groups, and for psychoeducational approaches delivered by medical doctors and nurses, as opposed to psychologists or other non-medical professionals.

Psychoeducational interventions involve health education, coping skills training, stress management and psychological support, and the researchers speculated their benefit might arise through a mixture of reducing patients' distress, encouraging healthy behaviours and treatment compliance. 'In addition, supportive social relationships might buffer the effects of cancer-related stress on immunity and thereby facilitate the recovery of immune mechanisms and may be important for cancer resistance,' they said.

Critics may question whether it is reasonable to combine results from such varied studies as was done in the current meta-analysis, and the researchers acknowledged that many of the studies were not as robust in their methodology as they should be. However, they end their review on a positive note: '...a tentative conclusion can be reached,' they said, 'that psychosocial interventions offered at an early stage may provide enduring late benefits and possibly longer survival.' CJ

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How often does psychotherapy make people feel worse?

In *British Journal of Psychiatry*

We hear a lot about the unwelcome side-effects of psychiatric drugs, but not so much about the fact that therapy can also leave people feeling worse than they did already. Data is thin on the ground, but best estimates suggest that between 5 and 10 per cent of therapy clients experience a worsening of their symptoms. Now a study in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* has provided further evidence, from the clients' perspective, about the prevalence of harmful therapy outcomes, with around 1 in 20 of thousands of participants saying that they had experienced 'lasting bad effects' from therapy.

Mike Crawford and his colleagues surveyed nearly 15,000 people who were currently receiving, or had recently ended, outpatient therapy for depression or anxiety via the National Health Service in England and Wales. Of the 14,270 people who answered the question about potential adverse effects of therapy, 763 said that they agreed strongly or slightly that their therapy had resulted in lasting bad effects, a proportion the researchers described as a 'substantial minority'.

The most common form of therapy was CBT, but other therapies the participants had received included psychodynamic therapy, counselling and solution-focused therapy. The survey suggested that no particular therapy approach was more often associated with bad outcomes. However, participants who said they were unsure what kind of therapy they'd received or who said they'd received an 'other' form of therapy (not listed on the survey) were more likely to report bad effects, as were

those who indicated they hadn't been given sufficient information about therapy before it started.

Participants from ethnic and sexual minorities were also more likely to report lasting bad effects – the researchers don't know why this might be but they said it may indicate a need for more emphasis on 'cultural competence' in therapists' training.

Therapeutic harm is a difficult issue to study – among other things, it's possible that any symptom deterioration would have happened anyway (of course this problem of interpretation also works the other way in that any symptom

improvement may actually have been quicker without therapy). But nearly all psychologists are in agreement that adverse effects from therapy are a real risk, and that we need to know more about how commonly they occur and how to

reduce the likelihood of them happening. This study therefore provides some welcome data on an important topic.

Indeed, Crawford and his team point out that well over a million people in England have received psychological treatment for common mental disorders in recent years, which means (based on the new data) that 'thousands of people could have experienced negative effects from treatment'. The researchers advised that 'clinicians delivering psychological therapies should ensure that people feel that they have sufficient information about treatment before it starts and obtain informed consent to treatment by ensuring that people considering psychological treatment for their condition are aware that there is the potential for both positive and negative effects.' CJ

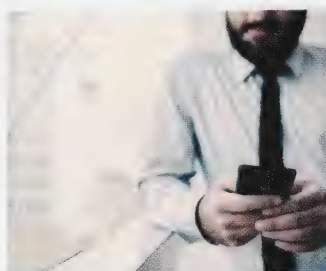


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Children aged four to seven were able to tell the difference between unlabelled professional abstract art and superficially similar works produced by other children or animals (chimps, monkeys and gorillas). However, they preferred the work of children and animals and thought it better quality. *Journal of Cognition and Development*

Being in a bad mood won't necessarily impair your mental performance. When participants completed mood questionnaires and mental tests for five consecutive days, both mood and cognitive performance fluctuated, but they did not correlate. *Intelligence*



Spending work breaks on a smartphone doesn't seem to be as rejuvenating as device-free activities. A study of hundreds of Korean workers found that those who spent their lunch breaks on their phones tended to show more emotional exhaustion in the afternoon. *Computers in Human Behavior*

Busy people are better at bouncing back from missed deadlines than those with fewer demands on their time. The researchers think it's because busy people are less demoralised by missing deadlines – they know that they've been spending their time productively on other tasks. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*

Unlike most people, healthy individuals who score highly on schizotypic personality traits seem to be able to tickle themselves. The finding adds to previous research that showed unusual self-tickling abilities in patients diagnosed with schizophrenia who experienced hallucinations and delusions of control. *Consciousness and Cognition*

Psychologists in South Africa have successfully reduced the average call time of ambulance phone operators by several seconds. The researchers analysed the operators' initial responses to calls and removed causes of ambiguity and delay. The new protocol is for them to say 'Ambulance service, Simon [replaced with their name] speaking'. *Journal of Health Psychology*



A longitudinal study of over 3000 male and female children growing up in Pelotas in Brazil, has found that those with lower resting heart-rates were more likely to commit acts of criminality. The result extends the established heart-rate/criminality association to women and to a culture with high crime rates. *International Journal of Epidemiology*

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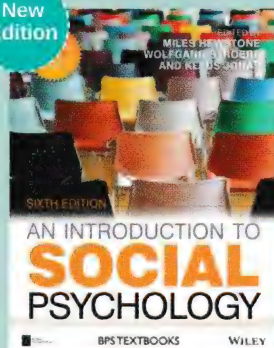
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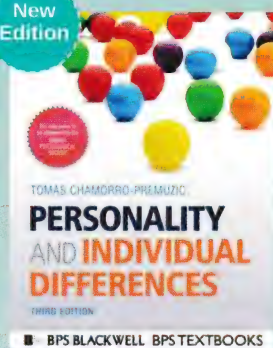
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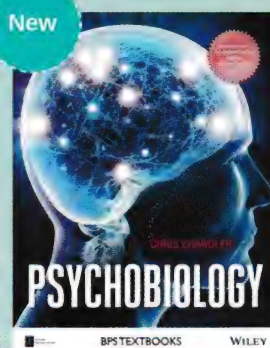
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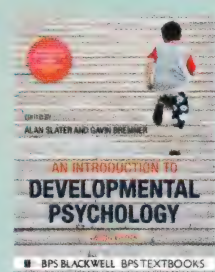
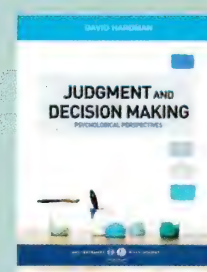
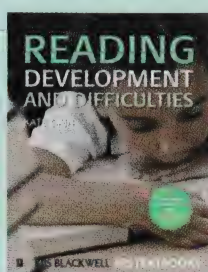
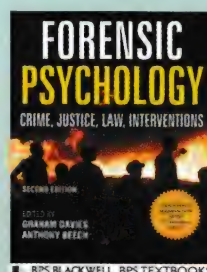
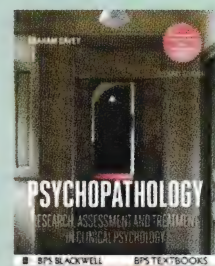
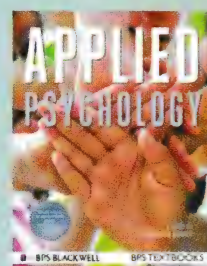
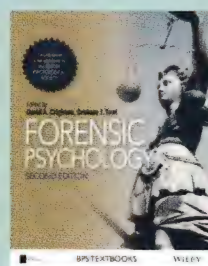
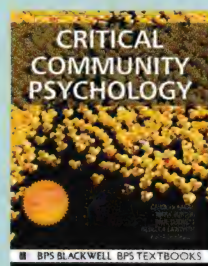
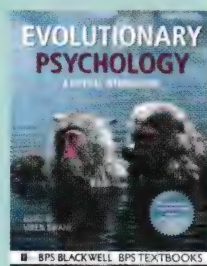
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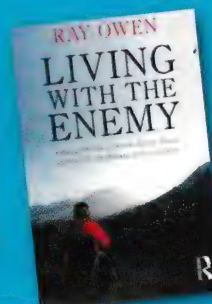
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About the trainer:

- Ray Owen is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Health Psychologist with over 20 years experience of working in Physical Health settings within the NHS.



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Are we punching our weight?

Our journalist **Ella Rhodes** asks whether psychology is having the desired impact, through the media and policy

Pick up today's newspaper, or go online, or turn on the radio. You will immediately be immersed in a world where psychology surely has so much to offer. An evidence-based approach to human behaviour is central to mental health, education, healthcare, employment, crime and justice. Behavioural change has been a hot topic of recent years. But as a discipline, is psychology there on the top table? Does the public really understand its full range of applications, or is it only the quirkier studies that make it into the mainstream media? What can psychologists do to move beyond 'pop psychology' and to

communicate quality science better? Will psychology always be considered lightweight in science terms, or can we learn from individuals who have had success in getting their message across?

In a search for impact, I spoke to academics, journalists and science-media specialists for their views on what we are getting right and wrong.

The court jester of sciences?

Professor Chris Chambers was inspired to speak out about how scientists can help journalists (and vice versa) after what he described as some 'interesting' coverage of

some of the research coming out of his department at Cardiff University. Chambers also helped to set up Headquarters, the *Guardian's* psychology blog, and contributes to it regularly. Pointing to many excellent psychology bloggers – including Dorothy Bishop, Neuroskeptic, and Vaughan Bell and Tom Stafford of Mind Hacks – Chambers told me that psychology was emerging as a field that was not afraid to be self-critical in public. However, he added, psychology is still regarded by the media as the 'court jester' of sciences.

'Present something counterintuitive and novel about human behaviour and you are more likely to get a *Nature* paper and a lot of media coverage,' Chambers said. 'The problem is that most of the time such claims turn out to be based on very flimsy evidence, and academics themselves can be complicit in exaggerating their evidence to publish psychological research in high-profile outlets.'

Chambers suggested that academics should take more responsibility for the content of the press releases that report on their work: some of his own research found much exaggeration in health news originates from press releases. The study, published in the *British Medical Journal*, looked at 462 press releases from 20 leading universities in the UK and found 40 per cent contained exaggerated advice, 33 per cent contained exaggerated causal claims and 36 per cent contained exaggerated inference to humans from animal research.

Professor Chambers added that the British Psychological Society has a role to play in ensuring that its members are not pedalling pseudoscience, although he admits that detecting this can be challenging. 'Pseudoscience is often unfalsifiable, reliant on anecdotal evidence and often in a commercial capacity, and not available for public scrutiny. There are also established lists of areas of science that are categorised as pseudoscience, for example neurolinguistic programming. In my opinion, the BPS should regularly review its member charter and ensure that where members do indicate pseudoscientific interests, those members are not using the BPS to promote those interests – and, if they are, their membership should be revoked.'

I asked Chambers why he felt so strongly about this. 'It matters because psychology is a young science with a lot to say about the mind and brain, and it has a role in shaping public policy,' he replied. 'So it's vital that we engage and interact with the public effectively. To



'We aren't trained to think that we know best'

'A lot of clinical psychologists wouldn't think of themselves as experts. We take the position that the client knows best – it's at the centre of our psychological training. We aren't trained to think that we know best.' So said Sophie Holmes, Lead Consultant Clinical Psychologist for Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, speaking to us about what stands in the way of some applied psychologists speaking out about their given fields.

Holmes has been an advocate of media engagement since the start of her career, when her thesis on women's experiences of pain in childbirth attracted local media attention. Later, after extensive work with people who experienced problems with hoarding, she took part in a Channel 4 documentary *Obsessive Compulsive Hoarder*. In turn, a report she later wrote – *A Psychological Perspective on*

Hoarding: DCP Good Practice Guidelines – garnered much media attention.

Holmes said psychologists' nervousness about engaging with the media was not always misplaced, as often a journalist or documentary maker's agenda is likely to be entertainment. 'Many documentaries either fall into an entertainment or factual and science category. If you're engaging with television you need to be sure of which department a particular programme is coming from.' If a programme appears to be made purely for entertainment, Holmes adds, 'there's a role for psychologists in advising documentary makers on care and aftercare

for people who appear in documentaries about mental health. There's also a benefit to being able to influence programmes and having a role in making them more

psychologically minded and based less on the medical discourse.'

Holmes spoke of the support she received from the British Psychological Society, whose Comms team put her in touch with Professor John Oates, who leads the Media Ethics Group. He offered

support to her as well as her Trust. She said: 'I can't rate the advice I was given highly enough. I don't know if I would have been able to get through the process without his support.' For example, Holmes

refused to film the client's therapy in the Channel 4 documentary – despite his approval. 'I held my ground on that issue, I didn't want to use the client to "sell" psychology, and I was able to talk it through with John Oates. He knew about Ofcom ethics and the processes involved in making a documentary.'

Holmes suggests encouraging psychologists to engage with the media when they are trainees. 'Students should consider including bullet points at the end of their work suggesting three ways it may be broadcast on local radio. We need to get the message out there. The public's interest in mental health and psychology is immense, and if we don't speak out we end up with potentially unqualified people giving comments with an aim to be famous. There are many worrying examples of that in the media.'



Sophie Holmes

paraphrase Fiona Fox, director of the Science Media Centre, "the media will do psychology better when psychologists do the media better".

How can psychologists do the media better?

Ed Sykes (Science Media Centre) told me that psychology stories make it into the mainstream media quite easily compared with other sciences, but he agreed with Professor Chambers that we should be sure to showcase our most rigorous research. He said: 'If you're working on something important and you are proud of your science, then tell your press office and tell the BPS press office – take the time to prepare and you'll end up with more accurate coverage as a result.'

Sykes concedes that many scientists have been put off speaking to the media, either for fear of being judged by colleagues or potentially broadcasting the wrong message. However, he feels that with a greater emphasis for researchers on public engagement now is the time to become more media savvy. 'Psychology experts need to stand up and get involved. If they don't weigh in when issues are being misreported, or if they

don't take the time to engage when an important story is about to break, then millions of people may be misled. When shoddy science is allowed to claim the headlines, trust in the entire field gets eroded.'

Julia Faulconbridge, a Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Chair of the British Psychological Society's Faculty for Children, Young People and their Families, said problems psychologists face when trying to engage with the media could potentially be overcome. 'The BPS needs a bigger set-up to deal with the media, and more support... It could be an idea to have a spokesperson from each Division or Section who is trusted to deal with the media with some training... there needs to be less centralisation and more autonomy. Psychology should be much more out there in the world.'

Claudia Hammond, a psychology graduate and presenter of BBC Radio 4's *All in the Mind*, emphasised the role psychology could play in policy if it had better exposure. She said where policy makers include psychology in their work it often comes via economists (see also box, 'An image problem?'). 'Policy makers won't even realise that there are psychologists out there doing relevant

research, and even when they do, it's not easy to find out what consensus from research is, if they don't have access to specialist psychology journals.' Hammond would like to see the day when researchers included on their websites the top three policy implications of their own work. She added: 'Sometimes researchers will say that it's hard making definitive recommendations until more research has been done, but policy decisions are being made right now. If we want psychology to have an impact, psychologists need to be prepared to say what decisions they would make now if they were in charge, based on the best evidence we have so far.'

When I spoke to Lead Policy Advisor for the British Psychological Society, Dr Lisa Morrison Coulthard, she agreed with Claudia Hammond that key insights from psychology were often not fairly acknowledged as such. 'There is greater recognition of the contributions of psychological science to a wide array of societal concerns – the Research Excellence Framework of 2014 highlighted this. But again a lot of "psychological" research is often labelled as another discipline – neuroscience, vision science, infant health, for example. So the impact for psychology can be lost.'

Dr Morrison Coulthard said that as long as the discipline does not speak with a united voice there will be barriers to having impact. 'It's no wonder that psychology is not as widely recognised as it could be when it is not portrayed as or understood to be psychology, and positions or views are not consistently conveyed as from psychology or from the BPS,' she added. Morrison Coulthard suggested a 'perceptions audit' for psychology and the BPS would be welcomed, to find out what needs to be done with respect to different target audiences.

I asked whether the relationship between policy and research work both ways: does legislation have an impact on the types of research being done? Dr Morrison Coulthard

replied: 'There is an increasing need for policy proposals or changes to existing policy to be evidence-based. But by the



Professor Fiona Gabbert and her colleagues have organised fascinating public engagement events – including a murder mystery evening

same token we need to be quicker as a discipline to react to emerging policy areas, and ensure that some of the

commonly held assumptions are tested in order to inform policy development in those areas.'

An image problem?

Professor Adam Grant (Wharton Management Department, University of Pennsylvania) is an organisational psychologist, but he reports being introduced 'at least once a week as a behavioural economist'. Writing for the LinkedIn ([tinyurl.com/zpz42rf](https://www.linkedin.com/company/tinyurl.com/zpz42rf/)), he pondered why so many psychology studies are presented as behavioural economics in the media. Are behavioural economists doing more interesting work than psychologists? Are they simply 'hotter'? After rejecting such hypotheses, Grant moves on to other potential explanations.

Grant suggests that people often think psychology simply points out the glaringly obvious, but he gives examples of experiments that point out the opposite of what we may assume to be 'common sense'; 'Ellen Langer and her colleagues found that if you ask to cut in front of people in line at a copy machine "because I'm in a rush", 94 percent say yes.

If you give no reason, only 60 percent say yes. But if you give a bogus reason, "because I have to make copies" 93 percent say yes. The use of a logical "because" is enough to trigger a mindless yes, even though the information that follows provides no new information,' he writes.

Grant also presents another hypothesis: that behavioural economics is viewed as more rigorous than psychology. He suggests that while people see economists as super-smart number crunchers, psychologists are seen as varying versions of Sigmund Freud. He concludes: 'Psychology has come a long way since Freud, but the brand hasn't caught up. The new psychological science of the mind and behaviour is based on randomized, controlled experiments with measurable



Professor Adam Grant

behaviors as well as fMRI and physiological data. Ideally, we'll start rebranding psychology as a source of interesting, rigorous ideas. Alternatively, [Daniel] Kahneman proposes that when it comes to formulating policy, we should stop drawing major boundaries between fields and just call ourselves behavioral scientists.'

Can a social science ever truly punch its weight?

Is psychology as a whole sufficiently weighty to have a big impact? In a letter to *The Psychologist* published in 2015, Phil Banyard (Nottingham Trent University) suggested that psychology had never had its own 'Big Bang' moment, and perhaps lacked the testable theories and influence of other sciences. Could this be why it may not have the impact via the media and policy that many would like to see?

Banyard stated that despite the 'bluster about science' and millions of pounds in grants, psychology had never really come to any huge or important understandings about the subject we study – ourselves. He wrote: 'A standard definition of psychology is "the scientific study of people, the mind and behaviour". So what are the headline discoveries about people, mind and behaviour? And do these findings match up to the discoveries of the other sciences?'

He said the central issue with psychology was the way in which we develop knowledge in the field: while other sciences have testable theories (such as Einstein's theory of general relativity), psychological theories do not produce predictions that can be tested in

this way. 'When it comes to knowledge in psychology,' Banyard wrote, 'we are not so much uncovering it as inventing it.'

However, Banyard concluded that we should perhaps look to different types of impact. Speaking of a 1969 talk by George Miller to the American Psychological Association he wrote: '[Miller] seemed to come to the same conclusion. He argued that we are looking in the wrong place if we are waiting for the great discoveries and applications to appear. He suggested that the revolution will come in how we think of ourselves.'

A different approach

Perhaps taking this approach – one based largely on self-insight – demands a more personal perspective. I spoke to Eleanor Longden about how she shared her own experiences of hearing voices and learning to live with them in a fascinating TED talk which has now been viewed more than three million times (see tinyurl.com/jj455s5). Since that time Longden has not only gained a PhD in psychology but has been on numerous lecture tours in the USA and Australia. She told me about engaging with the media in a truly unique way.

After struggling with increasingly threatening and abusive voices, Longden discovered the Hearing Voices Movement, founded in 1987, which sees hearing voices not necessarily as a symptom of mental illness but as something that can be coped with and understood. This theory allowed her to learn to live with her voices and was the basis of her TED talk.

Longden told me she was inspired to share her experiences as a means of transforming the abuse she had experienced into the basis for social action, adding: 'I've been harmed by many people who have never been held accountable for it. That can be intolerable, but although I may not have been able to find justice in the legal sense it's another avenue for pursuing it.'

Longden, who works as a postdoctoral researcher, said there were many good examples of psychologists engaging well with the media, but that more could be done. She suggested that her area of interest, clinical psychology, needed a strong critical and political focus. 'It's not just about maladaptive schemas and cognitive dysfunctions, there are fundamental issues of abuse, social injustice, oppression and trauma. These are pervasive factors which are literally

driving people mad, and pathologising individuals deflects attention away from that. This kind of distress happens in a context and there's a real risk of sanitising madness, clustering it into abstract symptoms and syndromes.'

Clinical psychology, Longden said, should not be removed from social reality. 'I do think psychology has a moral, ethical and professional responsibility to raise its voice and challenge social systems of injustice. There's a risk of over-professionalising psychology in academia. I'm part of that institution as a research scientist but it's important, while recognising the valuable role of research, to try not to be too rarefied about it.'

In looking for alternative routes to engagement and impact, I also came across the Forensic Psychology Unit at Goldsmiths, University of London, which opened in September last year. Unit director Professor Fiona Gabbert and her colleagues have organised fascinating public engagement events, including a murder mystery evening, and are already seeing the research at the unit sparking debate and potentially impacting on policy.

Gabbert made the interesting point that psychology does not have a standard audience any more. 'This makes it difficult to know what the audience want. Some are drawn to the hard science, while others want to be drawn in to more accessible, entertainment-based forms of engagement, and shown the relevance of research to their own lives. The type and tone of public engagement events is particularly important to consider now! As psychologists we shouldn't rule out true interdisciplinary collaborations with our colleagues in the arts to help satisfy some of these demands.'

Gabbert said the forensic unit had been active in engaging with groups outside the immediate research community, including working with Amnesty International and the College of Policing. She said recent work within the unit, particularly a new Structured Interview Protocol, has sparked interest among police forces and the International Criminal Court. She added: 'Myself and colleagues in the unit have run training courses in how to use the protocol to maximise the information gained from witnesses and victims. This kind of engagement is something we strive for in our research. We can maximise impact by developing collaborative working relationships with practitioners and policy makers from the outset. It's only by speaking with practitioners about what the key issues are for them, that we can ensure our

academic research addresses "real world" problems.'

What can we do about it?

Striving for the 'right' sort of coverage, appealing to the general public while holding on to scientific rigour, all in the context of increasingly stretched resources... that's a heavyweight challenge. From all those I have spoken to the defining message is one of not being afraid to stand up for, and speak out about, research, while taking responsibility for how one's work is covered. It seems many are calling for greater levels of bravery – in identifying oneself as an 'expert', a word that makes many academics cringe, and joining together in an attempt to speak with one voice as a discipline.

But perhaps we shouldn't beat ourselves up too much. Although psychology may be yet to fully punch its weight, when I spoke to Dr Tom Stafford (University of Sheffield) he pointed out that psychology is not the first science to be in this sort of bind. Speaking of the parallels between early geology and psychology, he said: 'On the one hand they [geologists] could only distinguish themselves if they said something new, such as that the earth was millions of years old, rather than thousands. On the other hand they found it easier to be accepted, and funded, if they pandered to popular prejudices, such as that the earth was in fact only 6000 years old. This tension between being able to get attention for ideas that fit with existing beliefs, but that ultimately degrade the value of the discipline, is exactly the one psychology faces today, I believe.'

Stafford said that the discipline has a dilemma: 'The media are keen to report psychology, but they are most keen when psychology just confirms common sense, our prejudices or suspicions – things like "bullies grow up to be unhappy adults". Everyone has an opinion on psychology, which is great in terms of engagement, but it can be a double-edged sword in terms of conveying nuances, or findings which don't conform to people's expectations.'

Over to you... Is psychology punching its weight? What does true 'impact' look like, and how is it best achieved through the media and policy work?

Join the debate by commenting on the online version of this article, tweeting @psychmag with #PsychPunch, or e-mailing your letters for publication to psychologist@bps.org.uk.

Arts-based research – radical or conventional?

David Carless and Kitrina Douglas make the case for an alternative methodology

Can psychological research help people live their lives? Can it offer members of the public personally meaningful insights to help them surmount the day-to-day challenges they face? Can it provide resources for individuals to draw upon as they strive to negotiate the complex realities of 21st-century life? Like many readers, perhaps, we would answer the first question with a resounding 'Yes!' We would also answer the other questions with a yes – although it might be more cautiously voiced. Replace the word 'Can...' in each of these questions with the word 'Does...' and our responses would be more uncertain. In fact, we would probably be forced to change our responses to: 'In general, probably not.' Given that the subject of psychology covers terrain that is – potentially at least – of such importance

to all people as they navigate their lives, this is a disappointing state of affairs.

Could it be different? Is it possible to do and share psychological research in ways that directly reach, affect, guide or help members of the public? Perhaps leading towards personal reflection, a sense of solidarity, local action, or more widespread social change? In this article we briefly outline one approach that strives towards these kinds of goals. It is a form of research we have engaged with since the early 2000s, which can be broadly described as *critical arts-based research* (see Bagley & Castro-Salazar, 2012).

Arts-based research is 'an effort to utilize the forms of thinking and forms of representation that the arts provide as a means through which the world can be better understood and through such understanding comes the enlargement of mind' (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p.x). Arts-based research is critical when it becomes overtly political by challenging dominant discourses and conventional ideas within society, while aligning with subjugated peoples and voices (Bagley & Castro-Salazar, 2012).

Our way of doing critical arts-based research has not been developed in isolation but has benefited from the work of a number of other researchers in psychology and beyond (e.g. Barone & Eisner, 2012; Chadwick, 2001; Gergen & Gergen, 2012). Our approach can affect and inform all phases of a project – from identifying a 'problem' or research question, gathering empirical materials

('data'), analysing collected materials, through to representing and disseminating findings.

Such an all-encompassing process cannot be neatly defined, categorised or delineated. Yet it does have some more general characteristics or hallmarks. In his 2013 Reith Lectures, artist Grayson Perry offered a series of boundary markers to identify what is – and what is not – art. Here, we use a similar strategy to briefly describe six boundary markers that, together, help clarify how our approach to research differs from methods more common to psychology:

- | Participants shape direction and focus
- | Embodied researcher-participant interaction
- | Imagination
- | Accessible and engaging
- | Expressing what cannot otherwise be said
- | Active audience

While other approaches to psychological research might share one or two of these characteristics, the combination of most or all of the six is, we think, unique to arts-based work.

Our description, however, can only go so far – we really need you to *experience* some of this work. Experiencing is key to grasping the contribution of artistic and performative methodologies. Without this, the words and arguments that follow risk ringing hollow. Therefore, we cite some examples of our work that are available in the public domain as short films that can be freely viewed online via YouTube (see box 'Online videos'). We invite you to explore these examples for yourself (and some accompany the online version of this article). Please feel free, if you wish, to 'talk back' to us by posting a comment or response. For academically inclined readers, we also cite a few examples of parallel work that we have published in peer-reviewed journals. Throughout, we do not mean to imply that arts-based methods replace existing ways of doing psychological research. We do, however, believe that these kinds of

Online videos

Across the Tamar: Three Poems

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AcJCjtTHaLw

Blue Funnel Line

www.youtube.com/watch?v=cftAy_SaurY

Gwithian Sands

www.youtube.com/watch?v=luUFDMLGfiE

The Long Run

www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-fprKKUGKo

These Things

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHFfa10pm9w

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approaches can beneficially extend and improve the ways psychological knowledge is both generated and disseminated.

Participants shape direction and focus

In contrast to the natural sciences research model, the focus and direction of our studies are strongly influenced by the participants. Through interviews and fieldwork we invite people to tell us about their lives in an extended conversation. Doing so, we witness their life stories. As students, conducting our first studies, we found that through this process participants often redefined the area of focus that we had identified in our research proposal. We felt compelled to respond to this redirection to be able to learn from relevant aspects of their experience. Our position became – and remains – that of a student, while we see the participants as experts of their own life experiences. Rather than us directing the focus, we ask them to take us and show us what is important in their lives (in the context of the research). Each participant points out what we need to know and where we need to look to find it. Now, as experienced researchers, we are more likely to hold off defining/identifying a focus and direction ourselves to allow instead the participants to do this.

This process was particularly evident during a study we conducted into the place of physical activity in the lives of older women in Cornwall. Time and again, the women we interviewed repositioned the meaning and value of physical activity in their lives – reclaiming it from its currently fashionable

instrumental, self-focused portrayal as a way of maximising one's own health and wellbeing. Through sharing with us their life stories, we saw how physical activity was often closely woven into their early life experiences – as daughters, sisters, friends, wives, mothers and, later, grandmothers. For many of these women physical activity was not about the *self* at all – it was about the *other*. While they often turned away from activity for themselves, they would often engage in activity when it was with and for a significant person in their lives. A sense of historical relational connections is evident in our film *Gwithian Sands* and discussed in Douglas (2012).

Embodied researcher-participant interaction

Central to our way of working is an *embodied presence* with participants during the research. As important as it undoubtedly is to listen – to truly hear what is being said – there is more to it than this. It is not just the words captured by our digital recorder that tell the tale. Instead, we try to become a 'listening body' and have faith that our body will sense, remember or understand certain kinds of insights that words may not capture. Obvious examples of this might include noticing

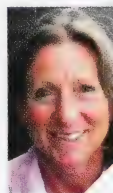
Meet the authors

'In addition to being a great source of enjoyment, the arts – for us particularly songs, films and novels – have also always been a way to better understand ourselves, other people and the wider social world. Initially, this was through listening, witnessing or reading other people's art. But as we began creating our own songs, films and stories, we began to recognise that these kinds of aesthetic and imaginative ways of working could lead us to new and sometimes unique insights. How ironic, we felt, that these approaches were rarely – if ever – used in psychology! So, around 15 years ago we made a deliberate effort to invite and welcome our artistic selves into our social and psychological research endeavours. Although this required us to support and nurture each other in the face of scepticism from some psychologists, we have increasingly found that our arts-based projects have become among our most valued, meaningful and influential research.'



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and documenting expressions and behaviours. More complex examples – which are harder to explain – might include an implicit understanding of something intangible, a personal connection with an aspect of an individual's history, or a sensitivity towards a feeling of alienation.

In recent work with military personnel who have experienced physical and/or psychological trauma, we have explored the value of a residential sport and adventurous training course. During our fieldwork, we both took part in several weeks of courses, engaging as group members in the course activities. Understanding the soldiers' experiences, we noticed, depended in large part on this shared experience. Co-experienced physical movement – for example during a wheelchair basketball session – seemed to 'loosen' otherwise silent stories, allowing personal and sometimes sensitive experiences to be shared (see Carless & Douglas, 2016). Readers might



A sense of historical relational connections is evident in our film *Gwithian Sands*

also get a sense of this kind of immersive researcher-participant interaction from the film *Across the Tamar: Three Poems*.

Imagination

In times when empirical observations of grounded reality are held as central to research, suggesting that psychological studies can include – even depend upon – imagination feels risky. To those psychologists wedded to a natural sciences model, it may be simply unacceptable and, perhaps, somewhat frightening. While we too value empirical observation of grounded realities, it is perhaps the inclusion and facilitation of imagination during what is traditionally described as ‘data analysis’ that most clearly distinguishes arts-based approaches. As students, we risked *playing* and *imagining* when we had been taught to work in more strictly controlled, methodical, structured, planned and focused ways. We didn’t know if it would work, but (at times) it felt instinctively right to do so. Over time, others’ responses to the insights we’ve generated through including our imaginations in a more open and unencumbered way has given us confidence to continue, realising that doing so opens a door to insights and understandings that may otherwise remain inaccessible.

The song and film *Blue Funnel Line* recounts the journey of a merchant seaman from Merseyside, through alcoholism and homelessness, to a supported housing scheme in Bristol. Although some lines in the song come directly from the interview transcripts, other sections stem from David’s aesthetic imagination as he searched for ways to musically make sense of and express chaotic experiences and powerful emotions. Although the song traces this individual’s particular experiences, any separation between participant and researcher is blurred as David reflects and draws upon emotions that arose as he became a *container for the other’s story*. Similar processes operated in writing the fictionalised story ‘That Night’ in response to stories of sexual abuse in professional sport (see Douglas & Carless, 2009).

Accessible and engaging

For many years, we both sometimes felt disempowered and excluded by the ways in which psychological research is typically written and disseminated. Understanding much of the research shared in journal articles, books and conference papers often necessitates a PhD-level education. For many people

outside academia it is completely inaccessible. If this knowledge is to help ordinary people, an intermediary – perhaps a professional psychologist? – is required to interpret and enact its insights. We envision an alternative: that the valuable insights of psychological research can also be circulated in such a way that they can be directly accessed by the public. This is a democratic ideal for research – one that does not depend upon an academic or professional ‘elite’ to act as mediators or gatekeepers.

We have worked towards this aim through some of our research, when we have felt it appropriate to do so. One example is our ongoing research into the value of sport and physical activity for people diagnosed with severe and enduring mental health problems. At times, we have published traditional academic analyses of participants’ experiences (e.g. Carless, 2008) that are theoretically and analytically ‘dense’ – this work is targeted at scholars of psychology and is unlikely to be accessible to the layperson. Seeking to offer more accessible, engaging and emotionally stimulating portrayals, we have also published accounts of participants’ experiences in short-story form (e.g. Carless & Douglas, 2010b). More recently, we have asked ourselves why we are limiting ourselves – and our participants – to academic arenas. The main reason, we decided, is simply academic convention! We now feel comfortable moving beyond academic channels of dissemination to share research through live performances, CDs and films. *The Long Run* – a film based on one participant’s experiences of physical activity and mental health – is one example. By posting this film on YouTube, it is freely available to billions of potential international viewers. The form of the film – combining first person narrative,

music, and diverse imagery – adds not only to its potential to engage, but also to what can be expressed about physical activity and mental illness.

Expressing what cannot otherwise be said

Some kinds of psychological knowledge and understanding, it seems to us, can only be glimpsed tangentially, through a kind of physical-emotional sensibility. They may not be amenable to being labelled, categorised or expressed through a numeric formula, a theory or logical statement of fact. Deep insights concerning, for example, another person’s embodied experience can perhaps only be evoked, implied or rendered aesthetically – perhaps through a more indirect or oblique use of language (such as metaphor and poetic, lyrical or evocative forms). We have found that artistic forms sometimes allow us to express complex, paradoxical or ambiguous forms of knowledge, understanding or wisdom. Sometimes, we may not have fully grasped these understandings ourselves, yet we want to include these tentative insights in our research, rather than omit them simply because they resist clear expression. Indeed, a good portion of the potential subject matter of psychology is sufficiently complex that it may never be fully grasped. Yet we believe it is sufficiently important that it should be included – even in an ‘un-mastered’ or imperfect form. By doing so, there is the chance that others may draw meaning and value from insights we are yet to fully appreciate ourselves.

A sense of these processes in operation is evident in the song and film *These Things*, which explores the experiences of residents and staff living and working together in an urban supported housing scheme. The participants in this research faced many significant difficulties in their daily lives which we, during our fieldwork, sometimes experienced vicariously. Emotions frequently ran high, anger and frustration sometimes raged. While we came away from the study with a sense that a highly complex social dynamic was at least ‘working’, it seemed fragile, volatile and under threat from economic and political changes. Through the song, we tried to express the melting pot of emotions that we, too, felt so acutely. Sections of the song are no more than a guttural scream that communicates an intensity of feeling that we could never communicate in words alone. Yet without facing and acknowledging these emotions, any understanding of the



We now feel comfortable moving beyond academic channels of dissemination



These Things explores the experiences of residents and staff living and working together in an urban supported housing scheme

behaviours and needs of residents and staff is impoverished.

Active audience

Arts-based approaches tend not to provide a finalised interpretation or conclusion, but instead offer the audience an experience from which they may form their own interpretations and conclusions. The composition, if it is successful, enables the audience to 'vicariously re-experience the world' (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p.20), thereby opening up new ways of seeing psychosocial phenomena. This places an onus on the audience to be active – to not sit back as passive recipients of knowledge, but to engage with and reflect on the material in the context of their own lives. In this sense, although we as researchers may resist the impulse to generalise in our compositions, it is often the case that audience members will engage in some form of generalisation. The result can be local knowledge that spurs action at individual and, potentially, community levels.

We have documented these processes in action in the wake of live performances (based on our research with older women in Cornwall) given to occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and sport and health science students (see Carless & Douglas, 2010a). The songs, stories and poems that comprise this 30-minute piece provoked many students to reflect and act

to improve their relationships with older people within both their family units and their professional practice. For some, this personal change occurred through gaining a different kind of understanding than is communicated through traditional research presentations. A hallmark of this understanding was that it derived from personal experience and retained sufficient emotionality and humanity to engender empathy, identification and advocacy.

So often, we find, the truest answer to a real-world psychological question is 'It depends.' Q: *Does physical activity help mental health?* A: *It depends.* Trying to offer a universal answer to these kinds of questions strikes us as misguided. If, however, the next question is 'What does it depend on?' then we're getting somewhere. This moment is an opening – it is the beginning of dialogue and insight. Critical arts-based research is ideally suited to triggering, generating and informing these kinds of moments. Through our critical arts-based research we aspire to deepen and expand public understanding through dialogues of this kind.

Conventional? Radical?

When we submitted this article, one reviewer responded: 'At the end, the authors actually make a rather conventional point.' As surprising as it may seem, we were both quite pleased with this response. After more than a

decade as postdoctoral researchers conducting arts-based and performative research in the human sciences, we are aware that some colleagues regard our ways of working as radical, others perhaps even find it preposterous. For these individuals, this simply is not the way human science research is done. Even one of our close collaborators and friends recently described us as 'mavericks'. But we have no desire to be seen as radicals or mavericks simply to be different – this threatens the acceptance and credibility of our work and, by implication, the interests of participants in our research. We want others to take our work seriously and to be unable to dismiss it as 'out there'. In this sense, we are happy to be seen as conventional. It even comes as something of a relief.

We aspire to live and work within a research community where the six boundary markers of arts-based research we describe above are accepted, respected and understood as vital components of psychological research. We want to walk into a lecture theatre and be able to perform our songs without fearing a rude or dismissive response from a student who has been 'educated' to respect only scientific presentations of psychological 'fact'. We hope that soon technical support and professional standards of sound and lighting will be routinely available at academic conferences to support live performances of research. We work towards a time when arts-based research will be welcomed and dignified with informed review by mainstream, high impact psychology journals. We look forward to the day when arts-based psychological research is rewarded with grants and financial support comparable to that received by experimental methodologies. We will embrace the moment when professional psychologists begin to routinely draw on the insights of arts-based research to improve their practice. We encourage those in positions of power to find some give in their seemingly unbending faith in statistics, to open their hearts, minds and wallets in response to the rigorous, ethical and revealing portrayals of human experience that arts-based methodologies can provide. At this point in time, these aims and desires still feel to us to be radical... in the extreme. We look forward to the time when they are regarded as conventional.

Making brain waves in society

Clíodhna O'Connor and Helene Joffe on the 'ripple effects' generated as a piece of neuroscience leaves the laboratory

The early years of the 21st century saw the increasing prominence of neuroscientific ideas in society. Popular science texts that drew heavily on neuroscientific findings became fixtures of bestseller lists, while neuroscientific concepts and imagery made regular appearances in novels, art galleries and museums. In the media, neuroscience became a standard reference point for explaining topical social and political issues: the global financial crisis, ascendance of ISIS and massacre on Utøya Island were just some of the events explained with reference to the relevant actors' neural processes. Campaigners against pornography, video games and social media began to employ neuroscientific concepts to paint the respective activities as dangerously addictive. Security companies advertised lie-detecting brain scans to lawyers,

governments, employers and insurance companies, and brain images were admitted as evidence in courtrooms to argue that accused criminals could not control their violent impulses. Vials of oxytocin were sold as 'Liquid Trust' for use in dating and the workplace, while 2010 saw the commercial launch of 'Neuro Drinks', a range of 'drinks with a purpose' that variously claimed to target the neurochemical foundations of sleep, alertness, mood, appetite control, libido, immunity and fitness.

Many have celebrated the prospects the so-called 'neuro-revolution' offers for advances in medicine, business and politics (Lynch, 2009). However, the cultural enthusiasm for neuroscience also has its detractors. So far, the most vocal criticisms focus on the frequently incorrect or exaggerated nature of popular neuroscience claims. Yet accuracy is not the only – or necessarily the most important – standard by which popular neuroscience can be appraised. In his recent book, Jarrett (2015) argues that many 'brain myths' are not merely factually incorrect, but actively harmful to those who come into contact with them; some brain myths, for example, perpetuate damaging stereotypes or ideologies.

While the factual accuracy of a given neuroscientific claim can be determined by

neuroscientific experts, questions about that claim's effects on society call out for an alternative analysis. Social psychological theories of knowledge, communication, attitudes, emotion and behaviour are ideally positioned to conceptualise the socio-cultural ripple-effects generated as a piece of science leaves the laboratory and enters wider society. Likewise, established social scientific methodological tools like surveys, interviews and textual analyses can empirically capture the repercussions that neuroscientific ideas have for the individuals and communities who encounter them.

Fortunately, over the last few years, a growing body of research has been applying these methodological tools to enlighten the position neuroscience occupies in contemporary society. In this article, we consider the key themes that characterise popular representations of neuroscience, and the risks and opportunities that lie therein.

Self-improvement

In 2012 our research group published an analysis of 3000 articles discussing brain research that had appeared in the British press in the previous decade (O'Connor et al., 2012). Our analysis showed that by far the greatest preoccupation related to ways individuals could enhance or protect their brain function. Almost half of the articles, flagged by titles like '10 scientifically proven ways to boost your brain', advised readers about lifestyle or dietary changes that would allegedly increase their neurocognitive capacity or guard against cognitive decline. Similar themes are found in other analyses of media coverage of neuroscience internationally (Thornton, 2011).

It seems that this media trend has registered with the lay public: a recent interview study we conducted, which asked members of the public to describe their associations with 'brain research', found that respondents often mentioned 'brain-training' and expressed concern



Vials of oxytocin were sold as 'Liquid Trust' for use in dating and the workplace

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that they were failing to fully exploit their brain's potential (O'Connor & Joffe, 2015). The interviewees also echoed a well-worn media trope in frequently comparing brain enhancement to physical exercise, implying that ensuring brain health requires a continuous programme of self-discipline.

What are the potential risks and benefits of this current interest in brain enhancement? So far, there is little evidence that commonly advised techniques, such as playing brain-training games and eating fish oils, have substantive or sustained neurocognitive effects (e.g. Kirby et al., 2010; Owen et al., 2010). However, some have suggested that the experience of deliberately 'working on' one's brain may nonetheless have positive psychological consequences. Neuro-enhancement practices intrinsically convey an understanding of the brain as plastic and malleable to individual will. Rose (2007) and Malabou (2008) suggest that consciousness of the brain's plasticity may afford a greater sense of control over one's life. Extensive research shows that the experience of self-determination is linked with a range of positive psychological, social and material outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

However, this valorisation of individual autonomy also has a darker side. Many social psychologists have drawn attention to the role played by individualistic values in solidifying inequalities and obscuring the influence of socio-structural factors on individuals' life-outcomes (Joffe & Staerklé, 2007; Sampson, 1988). The brain enhancement trend coheres with a cultural context in which individuals are afforded sole responsibility for their future health, wealth and wellbeing. Thornton (2011) contends that appeals for brain-training ultimately function to trap people in 'endless projects of self-optimization in which individuals are responsible for continuously working on their own brains to produce themselves as better parents, workers, and citizens' (p.2). The worry is that exposure to constant appeals

to 'work on' one's brain will generate endemic guilt and anxiety about the insufficiency of one's efforts, and that cases of neuropathology will ultimately come to be seen as the individual's own fault. In a society facing increasing rates of dementia and psychiatric disorder, this will compound the difficulties of these already vulnerable populations.

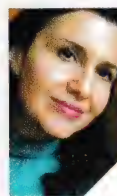
Individual responsibility for neurocognitive productivity may also place particular pressures on parents. Research shows that brain enhancement ideas frequently appear in popular parenting literature (Thornton, 2011), where parents are told they can boost their child's IQ by adopting certain nutritional, recreational or socio-emotional practices. This advice is often socially loaded: women who work outside the home, opt not to breastfeed, or fail to heed warnings about 'neurotoxins' during pregnancy are frequently condemned as irresponsible or uncaring mothers (O'Connor & Joffe, 2013). Claims regarding the lasting neurobiological effects of early experiences have been enthusiastically adopted by policy makers (Macvarish et al., 2014). In Britain a 2011 governmental report *Early Intervention: Smart Investment, Massive Savings* (see tinyurl.com/oohbygn), backed by all political parties, drew heavily on neuroscientific evidence to emphasise the moral and economic imperative of early intervention in the children of 'problem families', which would allegedly reduce teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, crime and unemployment. Early intervention initiatives can indeed yield many positive results for families. However, they can

Meet the authors

'When we began researching this topic in 2011, neuroscience's star was very much on the rise in popular culture. The conversations and column inches that might previously have been devoted to genetics or biotechnology were increasingly absorbed with the brain. At the time, this cultural shift was inciting much debate among philosophers and sociologists, many of whom asserted that neuroscience was revolutionising commonsense understandings of self, others and society. Tellingly, however, these dramatic claims were rarely accompanied by reference to empirical research that tracked the social and psychological impacts that neuroscientific ideas were having. We set out to investigate the empirical evidence for these assumed effects. Our research confirms that neuroscience features prominently in the mass media and is increasingly drawn upon in commercial, educational and social policies. However, direct research with members of the public suggests that in everyday thought and behaviour a true "neuro society" remains some way off.'



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also serve political agendas by situating the causes of social problems within parental failings, rather than structural issues of poverty and inequality. Since framing debate in terms of shrunken infant brains affords an emotive urgency and scientific gloss to these policy agendas, neuroscientific ideas can be used to justify the withdrawal of social support

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systems and the stigmatisation of disadvantaged communities.

It is, however, important not to be overly deterministic about the potentially negative repercussions of the media focus on brain enhancement. Recent studies show that while people often raise these ideas when conversing about neuroscience, relatively few actually engage in brain enhancement practices (O'Connor & Joffe, 2015). Despite their strong media and policy presence, appeals for brain enhancement are not experienced as sufficiently compelling to have affected day-to-day behaviour. One exception is in universities, where there is increasing concern about student use of artificial cognitive enhancers: yet even here, the proportion of students who use such measures is under 10 per cent (Singh et al., 2014).

Worries that brain enhancement discourses are feeding an increasingly competitive, individualistic society may therefore be somewhat premature. Nevertheless, a critical perspective on the ways brain enhancement can be drawn into socio-political agendas remains necessary. Given the limited evidence of the effectiveness of brain enhancement exercises, there is also an opportunity cost to consider: most people's leisure hours are limited, and time spent playing brain-training computer games is time not spent in activities with demonstrable benefits for physical and psychological health, such as exercising or connecting with loved ones.

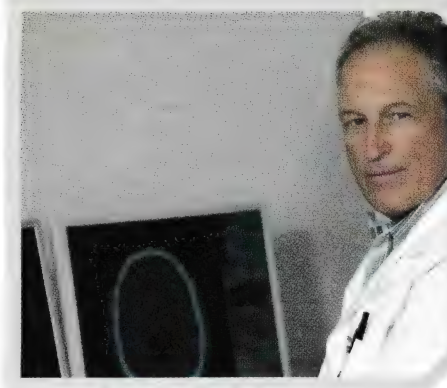
Underlining group differences

In the media, many of the group divisions that exist in our society – relating to variables such as gender, sexuality, criminality and mental illness – are frequently traced to these groups' possession of distinct neural characteristics (O'Connor et al., 2012). This theme is exemplified in the ubiquitous phrase 'the [female/gay/depressed/criminal] brain', which implies the existence of a homogeneous brain 'type' that is

universally shared by all members of that category. Popular neuroscience can thus purvey essentialist representations of social groups as biological 'kinds' (O'Connor & Joffe, 2014c).

Many welcome the advent of neuroscientific explanations of social difference, due to their perceived ability to ameliorate stigma. For instance, mental health charities strongly campaign for greater public awareness of the biological roots of mental illness, because they assume that this will foster more tolerant attitudes. Research shows that this expectation is shared by people with psychiatric diagnoses, for whom neuroscientific explanations can be critically important resources in sustaining positive personal and social identities (Buchman et al., 2013). Neuroscientific explanations have also been recruited to justify arguments for less punitive responses to crime and addiction, and to support the 'born this way' narrative of sexual orientation, which has historically been a key plank of the gay rights movement. Endorsing biological theories of sexuality does indeed correlate with more positive attitudes towards sexual minorities (Haslam & Levy, 2006).

Anti-stigma campaigners' hope that neuroscientific advances will prove a panacea for fighting social prejudices, however, may be unrealistic. The psychological essentialism literature has amassed an impressive body of research showing that for many social categories, such as gender, race and obesity, biological explanations consistently promote stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination (Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011). The literature shows more positive effects in relation to biological theories of mental illness and sexual orientation, yet even these are not unambiguous. While biological explanations of mental illness do reduce blame for inappropriate behaviour, they also increase fear, perceived dangerousness, harsh treatment and social distance (Read et al., 2006). Similarly, representations of homosexuality as



For many people, science also invokes a sense of fear and intimidation

biologically determined can be used to purvey an image of sexual minorities as intrinsically disordered (Kahn & Fingerhut, 2011). Furthermore, in the criminal justice system, neuroscientific explanations are not consistently linked with more compassionate responses to deviance: in some contexts, they can increase rather than decrease punitive attitudes and sentencing decisions (Saks et al., 2014). Neuroscientific explanations of difference may therefore be a double-edged sword when it comes to intergroup relations.

The ambiguous effects of neuroscience on stigma should not come as a surprise to anyone familiar with the attitude change literature. Decades of research show that gaining new knowledge is a poor predictor of attitude or behaviour change (Ajzen et al., 2011). Indeed, due to the motivated nature of human reasoning, incoming scientific information is often reconstructed so that it supports, rather than challenges, existing values and beliefs (Kahan et al., 2011). This was vividly illustrated by a recent project we conducted, which analysed how representations of a particular study of sex differences in brain structure evolved as the neuroscientific information moved from the initial journal article, through a university press release, into the traditional media and online commentary (O'Connor & Joffe, 2014a). Our analysis documented how aspects of the research that resonated

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with traditional gender stereotypes were preferentially emphasised by the press release, media accounts, and the researchers themselves in their interviews with journalists. Furthermore, elements of stereotypes not mentioned in the original research report, such as women's supposedly greater affinity for parenting and 'multitasking', were reconstituted in media coverage as the key 'findings' of the study. Our results suggested that scientific research on sex difference offers an opportunity for society to rehearse and reinforce prevailing gender stereotypes, which then benefit from the air of science that brain-information bestows. Thus, due to the human propensity to interpret external information in line with existing socio-emotional commitments, neuroscientific explanations of social difference may engrain rather than challenge existing group divisions.

A rhetorical tool

A final theme that runs throughout popular uptake of brain research relates to the use of neuroscience for rhetorical purposes. Early experimental research suggested that neuroscientific words and imagery have a persuasive effect termed a 'seductive allure': attaching irrelevant neuro-stimuli to an article made readers judge that article as more convincing (McCabe & Castel, 2009; Weisberg et al., 2009). Neuroscience's persuasive power outstrips that of other scientific fields: there is apparently something distinctively compelling about brain-based explanations (Fernandez-Duque et al., 2015). Our media analyses showed that this rhetorical advantage is extensively exploited in media dialogue (O'Connor et al., 2012). In our media data, the basic content of the brain information introduced was often superficial: it was put to explanatory effect and boasted the 'feel' of an explanation, but its actual explanatory power was weak. For instance, observing *that children's neural activity changes* while playing video games is not surprising, since any activity necessarily has unique neurochemical correlates. Yet this finding (and the fMRI images that illustrate it) can be effectively deployed to argue that modern technology is defiling the minds of today's youth. The term 'neurorealism' has been coined to describe the process by which neuroscience research is used to validate a certain view of the world (Racine et al., 2005). For instance, neuroscientific evidence might be recruited to prove that prisoners 'really are' intrinsically depraved, or that religious experiences 'really do' lead

people to higher mental planes. In pointing to neural correlates of a phenomenon, writers can portray themselves as dispassionate observers demonstrating the simple fact of their worldview's basis in the natural order.

Thus, neuroscience's ability to imbue arguments with objective, scientific authority makes it an effective vessel for propagating beliefs, values and ideologies. This is worrying, since those who exploit neuroscience's rhetorical power for commercial or political gain jeopardise the public's relationship with science more broadly. Public trust in science currently remains high, despite ongoing high-profile controversies over issues like MMR vaccination and climate change (Ipsos MORI, 2014). However, this trust is precarious: for many people, science also invokes a sense of fear and intimidation. People without a scientific background tend to be acutely conscious of the disparity in knowledge (and hence power) between themselves and apparent scientific experts (O'Connor & Joffe, 2014b). As a consequence of this imbalance, they typically defer to those who speak about science in an authoritative manner, even when the scientific argument is equivocal or under-developed. Rhetorical uses of neuroscience could therefore deter people from contributing to public debates or manipulate them into supporting agendas that are against their interest.

It is, however, important not to overstate the risks inherent in neuroscience's rhetorical power. The original experimental evidence of neuroscience's 'seductive allure' has proved challenging to replicate (Farah & Hook, 2013). Emerging research suggests that the seductive allure may indeed exist, but in an extremely context-dependent way (Scurich & Shniderman, 2014). Specifically, people who already agree with a given proposition show the neuroimage-credibility effect when the neuroimage supports their own opinion, *but those affiliated with opposing positions do not*. Thus, it should not be assumed that laypeople will automatically capitulate to arguments that appeal to 'neurorealism'. When the argument is one with which they are motivated to disagree, laypeople are capable of marshalling resistance and counterarguments, or indeed re-appropriating the same scientific principle to suit their own purposes. For instance, findings of sex differences in brain structure can be recruited to support both religious and feminist conceptions of gender, by construing the brain differences as 'proof' of the power of either divine design or

cultural role-divisions (O'Connor & Joffe, 2014a).

Finally, it is important to remember that despite the extensive media coverage, for many if not most of the lay public, neuroscience remains mere background noise in everyday life. Many people do not notice its prominence in the media, and certainly do not actively seek its input in their day-to-day activity (O'Connor & Joffe, 2014b). Until placed in a position where neuroscience suddenly becomes personally relevant (e.g. when one develops a brain disorder), neuroscience's direct influence on everyday thought and behaviour may be limited. To overestimate the sway neuroscience holds over the lay public would perpetuate the very 'neuro-hype' that is under criticism (Pickersgill, 2013).

Conclusion

As neuroscience's position in public spheres expands, it is important that its wider social and psychological implications continue to be scrutinised. Empirical research on the topic has highlighted a number of principles that should guide us. First, neuroscience's effects on lay populations are not linear or predictable: scientific information is mediated through complex social psychological systems that can reject, reconstruct or repurpose it. Careful research is required to uncover these patterns. Second, discussion of neuroscience's societal effects tends to focus on the ways it could transform society, yet the ways it can solidify existing features of social reality are equally deserving of attention. Evidence collected to date suggests that the most critical implications of neuroscience may lie in reinforcing, rather than revolutionising, the status quo. Finally, there is a clear role for social psychology in delineating the position neuroscience occupies in contemporary society. Most existing discussion of the trend comes from neuroscientists themselves, who *tend to focus on the factual (in)accuracy* of popular neuroscience claims. Yet establishing truth/falsehood contributes little to uncovering the substantive effects that a piece of knowledge has as it moves through society, since a scientifically sound idea can easily be used in socially destructive ways. To fully understand the promises and perils inherent in popular reconstructions of neuroscience, the theories and techniques of social psychology must be applied to unpick how the widespread circulation of neuroscientific concepts affects how we see ourselves, other people and the world around us.

Our struggle between science and pseudoscience

Chris Ferguson takes a dim view of the state of academic psychology, but trusts that the light shining on our discipline will show us the way

Last year was, in many respects, a bad year for academic psychology. A replication effort of 100 published studies in psychology found that the majority of such 'classic' studies are hard to replicate (Open Science Collaboration, 2015). The American Psychological Association (APA) became embroiled in scandal, with a report they commissioned concluding that APA staffers and some eminent psychologists had colluded with the US government to change the APA ethics code to allow psychologists' participation in the torture of detainees (see Grohol, 2015). The APA further tarnished their image as a scientific organisation by releasing a policy statement on video games that was soon criticised for stacking the task force with conflict-of-interest members, lack of transparency, and excluding inconvenient data from its review (see Wofford, 2015). The British Psychological Society (BPS) was not immune from controversy, with the election of Peter Kinderman as President eliciting some critique regarding his public comments on mental illness (see Coyne, 2015a). And the refusal by scholars in the PACE trial of chronic

fatigue treatment to release data revealed continued problems with transparency in published science (see Coyne, 2015b).

These are, in fact, only some of the most dramatic pieces of 'bad news' for academic psychology during 2015. It is worth taking a step back, all of us, and asking what has gotten our field into the credibility hole it currently finds itself.

Last year, I wrote an essay for *American Psychologist* (Ferguson, 2015) detailing several areas of dysfunction within academic psychology that are harming our reputation among the general public,

policy makers and scholars in other fields. These included the replication crisis, as well as both the questionable researcher practices that contribute to this unreliability and the hostile response by some scholars toward efforts to shore up methods and improve transparency. I also identified psychology's tendency to grab for newspaper headlines with catchy

counterfactual findings (many of which prove unreliable) on one hand, and wag a moralising finger over issues ranging from parenting practices to media consumption with the other.

Thus, at the moment, academic psychology appears to me to be poised somewhere at a crossroads between an actual science, and something closer to pseudoscience. The online Merriam-Webster dictionary defines pseudoscience as 'a system of theories, assumptions, and methods erroneously regarded as scientific'. Do psychology's scandals of 2015 suggest this is the path we are heading for? And, if so, what can we do to change course?

Science as a flawed endeavour

Perhaps the best defence we can raise for academic psychology is that the problems we're seeing for psychological science are not unique. Medical science, for example, is known for its problems with publication bias, conflict-of-interest funding, and poor replicability. Some reproducibility efforts have suggested, for instance, that a majority of pre-clinical cancer research is difficult to replicate (Begley & Ellis, 2012). But pointing to problems with other fields hardly absolves our own. We need to look at our own science and investigate how we can improve what we are doing.

In part, our problems may stem from the folk tale we often tell ourselves that academic psychology is a 'real science', and the 'facts' handed down through published studies into textbooks are 'objective'. We think of ourselves as disinterested, our findings immutable because they've gone through peer-review, and consider our fields of research open to correction, even as we personally resist any correction to our own published research. I don't mean to suggest a post-modern alternative in which all knowing is equal, and a world devoid of facts. But I do suggest that, too often, academic psychology has created a veneer rather than reality of science. Sometimes this is



The problem is that studies on catharsis typically randomise people to specific tasks, like punching a bag, they would likely never do in real life when angry

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due to defensiveness, egos, politics or outright fraud. But I maintain that the majority of issues stem from good faith efforts: individuals who value science but are all too human, and apply scientific values unreliably. I think this is a fault all scientists have, and I do not exclude myself. But, by failing to acknowledge the human limitations of science, we fail to consider the human limitations of our endeavours and remain appropriately humble.

Psychology's mythmaking

Due to psychology's problem with replication, and its sometimes stubborn resistance to correction, it has become apparent we are increasingly responsible for creating myths about the way humans work as we are for correcting myths. At times it seems academic psychology is so fascinated with 'myth-busting' that it creates statements of absolute certitude based on flawed or limited science, simply for the satisfaction of being able to say to the public, 'Hah, you thought people worked this way, but see... they don't. We know better!' I understand how this must be satisfying to academics who have invested their lives studying human behaviour. And of course it can get newspaper headlines, if not the potential for future grant funding. But it's an inherently dangerous strategy for a field, which will look twice as bad for having stuck its neck so far out, should those counterfactual findings prove to be erroneous.

Consider the common belief that venting anger is 'cathartic'. Granted, the relationship between anger and catharsis is likely a complex one as is most human behaviour. The 'folk wisdom' that punching a pillow is good for you is undoubtedly too simplistic. But so, too, has been the response of academic psychology which presents the idea as

"we are increasingly responsible for creating myths about the ways humans work"



Meet the author

'Even as a graduate student I realised there were often extreme gulfs between the public statements of psychologists and the data available to support them. I have become increasingly curious about academic culture itself, how the field of academic psychology, often acting in good faith, promotes certain myths and misbeliefs about human behavior. Although these issues relate to statistical problems, the weaknesses of null-hypothesis testing and our aversion to replication, at root, cultural issues within the field appear to be critical to understand if our field is to move forward. Too often psychologists think what they're doing is an objective science, but instead, it may be important to increasingly open up psychological science to its own sociological analyses to understand how knowledge is constructed, communicated and sometimes mis-communicated.'

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a 'myth' (see Grant, 2015). When one publically states the phenomenology experienced by so much of the general public to be a 'myth', the data better be solid. Unfortunately, that's where academic psychology often has the greatest problem. The myth/countermyth of catharsis is illustrative. Rather than counter a simplistic popular view with an informed and nuanced discussion, academic psychology has countered with an opposing extreme, simplistic and ideologically rigid view that it always has an inverse effect, which ignores evidence against this position and relies on weak data. The problem is that studies on catharsis (e.g. Bushman, 2002) typically randomise people to specific tasks, like punching a bag, they would likely never do in real life when angry. Using catharsis

to reduce anger is very much an individual choice between numerous behavioural options (whether it works or not). Few punch a bag or pillow. By focusing on this, psychologists are studying a cliché, not real life.

With a little thought, the flaws to taking such a simplistic, extreme view are obvious. It should be no surprise that giving people a specific task to do under contrived circumstances that they may feel is ridiculous, might increase rather than decrease frustration (and this ignores the potential for demand characteristics). We also forget, other studies suggest that catharsis may work under varying circumstances for different individuals, having both benefits and pitfalls (Bresin & Gordon, 2013). We forget too, that psychological findings very often report what the scientists wants to see, and most recent studies of catharsis have been by scholars advancing social cognitive theory, in many ways catharsis theory's

community, and the general public.
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competitor. Just because Ford says Ford cars work better than Peugeot doesn't mean we should stop thinking critically about the issue and challenging assumptions. But this is exactly what academic psychology has done on the catharsis myth/countermyth and so many other issues.

My point is not that catharsis works or does not work. I merely highlight an example of where academic psychology has labelled a popular perception a 'myth' but has done so using shaky studies, ignoring the slanted ideologies of the field itself and data that might suggest the 'truth' is nuanced. If academic psychology had its act together in terms of reliability, transparency, ideological and moral neutrality, absence of politics, methodological rigour, absence of publication bias, etc., such behaviour may be defensible. But, in light of only increasing problems facing academic psychology, I argue that humility, nuance, qualifications and asterisks are our safer path.

To me, it seems too often that psychological science is eager to rub in the faces of the general public that their thoughts about how humans work are wrong and psychologists know better. Whether from the perception of free will to the phenomenology of the g-spot, psychologists tread a loose board when telling people their personal experiences aren't real. Again, if the science is solid, this may be worth doing. I am not advocating to allow people their myths. But we do need to be careful not to create our own myths in our zeal to show the public how smart we are. This issue is fundamentally a cultural one. That is to say, we need to look for ways to change our academic culture, to focus it on the long slog of objective fact, rather than the short fix of newspaper headlines, politically right thinking, moral superiority, and grant grabbing.

A recent entry on the British Psychological Society's own Research Digest blog highlights this issue, with a list of the supposedly most counter-intuitive psychology findings ever published (Jarrett, 2015). This post repeats the controversial venting anger issue, and also makes some conclusions that could clearly lead to problems should they prove wrong, such as that teaching to learning styles may be without value, that depression in pregnant mothers can be good for their infants, or that including narcissists in teams can be good for their creative productivity. Given the

remarkable replication failure rate for psychological studies, and the potential particular susceptibility of 'counter intuitive' findings to exaggeration, the risk of highlighting these in ways that may result in changes in behaviour or policy are not trivial.

Society's nervous nanny?

Most of us can remember people in our lives, perhaps our childhoods, who mainly seemed to function to tell us everything we were doing was wrong. Keep scrunching up your face like that, it'll freeze that way. Crack your knuckles, you'll get arthritis. Stop touching that thing, it will fall off. My observation is that psychological science spends too much time being this nervous nanny for society, dispensing moralising yet dubious bits of folk wisdom about why whatever the public is doing is wrong.

Eventually, most of us learned to tune out these people in our lives. Psychological science risks the same.

'Stop what you've been doing for years!' statements from academic psychology are typically phrased as absolutes with clear moral consequences. You are bad people if you do not follow our advice. The APA's flawed 2015 statement on video games and aggression provides a template for how this happens. First, it must be observed that psychologists, as a group, are a self-selecting sample, typically liberally biased (Redding, 2001). But when constructing policy statements, academic guilds like the APA routinely construct task forces from among scholars with clear *a priori* hardline positions on an issue who can be counted on to render a set conclusion.

This was the problem with the video game statement. When the task force was announced it worried enough scholars that 238 of them wrote to the APA asking them to simply retire all their policy statements on video games (Consortium of Scholars, 2013). Nonetheless, the APA allowed the task force to continue to its strange conclusion: a meta-analysis that included only 18 studies (including at least one with no relevant contrast) out of a field of over 100, with the task force particularly neglecting available null studies (in their report, the task force at one point acknowledges voting on what studies to include or exclude). None of the task force's data or notes on study inclusion/exclusion have been released publicly.

Another illustration of academic psychology's tendency to finger-wag, often based on biased and limited data, is the debate on spanking. Spanking (open handed, non-injurious swats to the behind as punishment) is largely unpopular with liberally minded psychologists (myself included). But public moral pronouncements with a veneer of 'science' need to be careful. However, in typical form, task forces on the issue (such as the recent interdivision, APA Division 7 and 37 task force: Task Force on Physical Punishment of Children, 2015) often include only scholars on one side of the debate, excluding sceptics (e.g. Larzelere & Cox, 2013).

Spanking research is also a good example of what I sometimes refer to as 'the scientific pile-on effect'. Once something is identified as 'naughty' (video games, spanking, soda, etc.), it's predictable to see an ever-increasing crescendo of studies linking the naughty thing to everything bad imaginable... bad behaviours, low intelligence, adult health problems, cancer, global warming... This is really the inverse of snake oil salesmanship. Just as hucksters sold junk medicines with cure-all promises, academic psychology spends too much time selling moral agendas with claims that the naughty thing, whatever it is, causes all problems, just as snake oils cure all ills. This scientific pile-on effect should be a warning that something has gone amiss in the scientific process.

With spanking, my observation, once again, is a kind of dishonesty in representing weak and inconsistent results as more conclusive than they actually are. One example is from a study that received wide press attention claiming to link spanking to adult health problems (Afifi et al., 2013; I note in defence of the authors, they can't control press coverage). The study, in fact, did not isolate spanking from potentially abusive forms of physical punishment. Moreover, an examination of their results reveals that of seven health outcomes considered, results in models controlling for other influences were significant for only two, arthritis and obesity, and these at the fragile level of significance near $p = .05$. Public discussions of this study ignored the mishmash of significant to non-significant results, the high potential for type I error in marginal findings, and overall weak effect sizes. It is the failure of psychological science to put results into proper context that so often causes us harm.

Instead, when presented with scepticism or doubt, we often see



Once something is identified as 'naughty' (video games, spanking, soda, etc.), it's predictable to see an ever-increasing crescendo of studies linking the naughty thing to everything bad imaginable...

psychological science react defensively with ludicrous claims. Far too often I see psychological scientists defend their work by comparing it to climate science, medical effects or evolution. Or scholars sometimes conflate within-individual effect sizes to population-level impact. The logic goes something like, 'Well, if the correlation between eating blueberries and suicide is $r = .01$, that means that one out of ten thousand people could be saved from suicide if we convince everyone to stop eating blueberries.' Or defenders might cite the importance of blueberries/suicide by saying the effect size is similar to that of the Salk Vaccine Trial, with its infamously miscalculated effect size of $r = .011$ (the actual effect size of the Salk Vaccine Trial is closer to $r = .74$). The Physicians' Aspirin/Heart Attack Trial is another infamously miscalculated and misused effect size, with reports often suggesting it is near to $r = .03$. The actual effect size is closer to $r = .52$; see Ferguson, 2009). These spurious comparisons between psychological science and other, well-established fields (despite the statistics behind them having been debunked) are part of the evidence establishing so much of academic psychology as pseudo-scientific in its enterprise.

Where do we go from here?

The good news for academic psychology is that many scholars really are invested in objective science. Unlike, say Flat Earth beliefs, astrology, or phrenology, many adherents to academic psychology understand there are problems and are dedicated to fixing them. At the same time, there is also certainly resistance to change, transparency, improved rigour and conservatism in public pronouncements. Much of this resistance, unfortunately, appears to have originated within professional guilds, with their unhelpful policy statements on multiple

issues. This is why I state that academic psychology is at a crossroads between science and pseudoscience.

Many of the suggestions for how to improve matters have been stated publically so often, they need only a brief repetition here. We need to focus on replication rather than novel findings. We need more transparency, and pre-registration of research protocols. We need to become less rigidly ideological about theory. We need to be careful about letting good-faith advocacy beliefs corrupt scientific integrity. Here, though, are a few thoughts on issues I feel are important, but often missing from these discussions.

We need to be more realistic about effect size. Much of the discussion of replication has focused on whether results do or do not exist across replication efforts. There's been less discussion about results that may replicate but are so small as to be trivial. Unfortunately, psychology has no real conception of the trivial, and that has invited all manner of pseudoscientific efforts to extend tiny effects into important findings. Psychology needs to develop a healthy sense of the trivial, which, frankly, probably encompasses a majority of findings, and stop highlighting these as crucial for people to know about.

Death by press release. The urge to see one's research get recognition from the masses in print is entirely human and understandable. But a certain recklessness often creeps into press releases, which are not bound by the peer-review of the original article. It's curious that a science that seems so concerned about myths would be willing to blithely misinform the public based on novel findings, the replicability of which may be unknown.

I am not suggesting the end of press releases. But given their lack of peer-review oversight, I am suggesting that press releases are ultimately the responsibility of the study authors. Acknowledge tiny effect sizes, inconsistent findings from other studies, methodological weaknesses. Adopt a cautious, qualifying tone. I get it that this is the sort of thing that results in less news coverage. But as things currently stand, press releases from psychological studies are probably creating more myths than they are challenging.

Stop picking on the kids. Nothing seems to get attention more than the latest study suggesting how youth today are worse than ever before. More narcissistic, less

empathic, more addicted to video games, less interested in homework. Most of this is rubbish and makes us look bad. For some reason, youth appear to be the last demographic that psychological science feels free to disparage with complete disregard. Unfortunately, those youth eventually grow up and remember...

We need better leadership from our guilds. First, we need to remember that our professional organisations are not neutral arbiters of facts, but professional guilds driven to promote our professions (often come what may). Our guilds have often been the shaft of the spear, pushing researchers to make bolder and more irresponsible statements. New myths are created that appeared to benefit the profession. What better than a set of counterintuitive findings that upend how most people view the world?

I believe our guilds hold a primary responsibility for the damage done to the reputation of our fields. But they can be a source of guidance for responsible conduct too. Most 'policy statements', at least those that appear to speak to scientific 'fact' or make declarations on moral issues, should be eliminated or retired immediately. Our guilds need to become more proactive in encouraging careful, cautious, balanced communication of research findings. This would take a considerable change of culture within these organisations and among the staffers that run them, but it's a change members should insist upon.

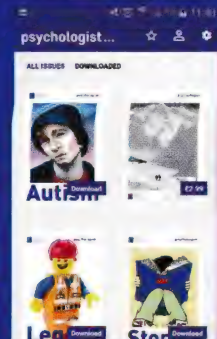
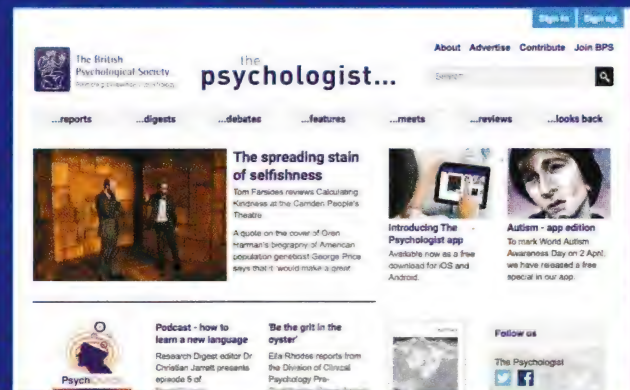
My impression is that academic psychology has been here before. None of the issues being raised under the umbrella of 'replication crisis' are inherently new. And, arguably, the history of how psychology has responded to these crossroads is not encouraging. In the past, academic psychology seems to have settled on pseudoscience more often than it has pushed itself to be better. But perhaps this time will be different. Our problems are attracting considerable attention and, as the saying goes, there's no better disinfectant than sunlight. And there seems to be real momentum behind change among many scholars.

I do think things will improve. But it will, fundamentally, take a change in culture. This will mean a difference in the way we train students, the way we publish, the importance put on grants, and the centrality of professional guilds to our profession. An effort to make psychology a true science will be long, painful and require determination. But, I believe, it is a goal worth striving for, and one we can achieve.



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Poetry as a mental health resource

Words and poem by Helena Dunthorne

I created this poem in response to a problem I faced whilst designing materials for Mental Health Awareness Week at Sunderland College: how can I describe 'worry time' to students in a way which is simple, memorable and fun? I placed copies of the poem in small gift boxes, which the students could personalise and take away. The idea proved to be popular and was easily understood. Whilst the poem was designed to facilitate promotional work, I believe that it may also have a place within therapy.

Graves (1922) argued that 'a well-chosen anthology is a complete dispensary for the more common mental disorders and may be used as much for prevention as for cure' (p.85). Indeed, before therapists, poetry helped individuals cope with their difficulties by validating their problems, thus reducing the sense of isolation experienced (Harrower, 1972). Whilst I am not suggesting that my poem provides the solution to excessive worry, evidence supports the utility of poetry in therapeutic work. Reading poetry helps patients express their feelings (Mazza & Prescott, 1981) and promotes self-discovery (Mazza, 1981). This is supported by neuroscientific research: reading experimenter-selected poetry activated the posterior cingulate cortex and the medial temporal lobes, areas linked to introspection (Zeman et al., 2013). Patients often struggle to remember health-related information (Ley, 1989), but rhyming verse is easier to recall than standard text (Walton, 2011). Furthermore,

reading and discussing poetry may promote greater learning than passive listening (Foster & Freeman, 2008).

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The 'What If?' Worry

I am a 'what if?' worry
I lurk inside your head
I go round and round in circles
And fill you with pure dread.

Though I am very clever
the truth I cannot see
The future is unwritten
And what will be will be.

So when I become active
Reduce my tightening bind
Write me on a piece of paper
Release me from your mind.

Store me in this worry safe
Come evening set me free
I may not be as scary
As I once appeared to be.

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Buried in bullshit

Tom Farsides and Paul Sparks smell trouble

The amount of energy needed to refute bullshit is an order of magnitude bigger than to produce it. (Alberto Brandolini)

According to Frankfurt (2005), 'liars' and 'bullshitters' both falsely represent themselves as prioritising truth. They differ because liars actively try to hide the truth whilst bullshitters care less about the truth than they do about other things that are potentially in conflict with it.

Let's use the term 'scholars' for people who sincerely prioritise truth.

Note that this cast list is compiled by intentions and endeavours, not by outcomes. All three characters may communicate truth or falsehood irrespective of whether they do so unintentionally, incidentally or purposefully. Note also that there may not be strong relationships between character and competence. People can fall anywhere between ineptitude and finesse at lying, bullshitting and scholarship.

There is a worrying amount of outright fraud in psychology, even if it may be no more common than in other disciplines. Consider the roll call of those who have in

recent years had high-status peer-reviewed papers retracted because of confirmed or suspected fraud: Marc Hauser, Jens Förster, Dirk Smeesters, Karen Ruggiero, Lawrence Sanna, Michael LaCour and, a long way in front with 58 retractions, Diederik Stapel. It seems reasonable to expect that there will be further revelations and retractions.

That's a depressing list, but out-and-out lies in psychology may be the least of our worries. Could most of what we hold to be true in psychology be wrong

(Ioannidis, 2005)? We now turn to several pieces of evidence to demonstrate compellingly that contemporary psychology is liberally sprayed with bullshit (along with some suggestions of a clean-up).

Lies, damned lies and statistics

Almost all published studies report statistically significant effects even though very many of them have sample sizes that are too small to reliably detect the effects they report (Bakker et al., 2012; Cohen, 1962). Similarly, multi-study papers often report literally unfeasible frequencies of statistically significant effects (Schimmack, 2012).

In addition, many of the analyses and procedures psychologists use do not justify the conclusions drawn from them. A striking and common example is failing to correct for multiple tests. If there is a fixed chance of obtaining a statistically significant result (e.g. $p \leq .05$) when there is no genuine phenomenon, the chance of obtaining misleading statistical

significance increases with the number of tests performed. Psychologists routinely fail to correct for multiple comparisons (see Cramer et al., 2014). Apparent results, such as associations between astrological star signs and particular medical conditions, often disappear once appropriate corrections are made (Austin et al., 2006).

Dodgy dealings

So-called 'p hacking' also remains rife in psychology. Researchers make numerous decisions about methods and analysis, each of which may affect the statistical significance of the results they find (e.g., concerning sample size, sample composition, studies included or omitted from programmes of



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research, variables, potential outliers, statistical techniques). Simmons et al. (2011) vividly illustrate this by reporting a study that 'revealed the predicted effect [that] people were nearly a year-and-a-half younger after listening to *When I'm 64* than they were after listening to 'a control group tune that did not mention age' (p.1360).

For example, evidence is increasingly revealing that alarming numbers of psychologists are willing to admit having engaged in questionable research practices (Fiedler & Schwarz, 2015; John et al., 2012). Many published studies have selectively included or omitted evidence to support claims that authors must know are far from accurately representing the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth (Belluz, 2015; Franco et al., 2016; Neuroskeptic, tinyurl.com/j2patqu).

Unconvinced readers can discover for themselves how easy it is to 'Hack your way to scientific glory' by visiting an online tool (tinyurl.com/pjhh5m8) and selecting different sets of variables from a genuine database to find (or 'fail' to find) a significant relationship between the US economy and a particular party being in office.

Some are fighting back against these practices. Inzlicht (2015) blogged about a paper he acted as an editor for: 'emblematic of the old way of doing business, with 7 studies that were scrubbed clean to be near-perfect'. The revision disclosed an additional 11 existing studies, included more appropriate analyses and reported only two significant effects. 'I am a huge fan of this second paper,' Inzlicht wrote. 'I love all my children, but I would be lying if I said that this wasn't my favorite as editor. I love it because it is transparent; and because it is transparent, it allows for a robust science. This push for transparency, of revealing our warts, is exactly what the field needs.'

Why are more editors not following

Meet the authors

A few years back, we became increasingly uncomfortable claiming expertise in our respective research areas. Increasing numbers of papers were being published, each with a growing number of studies and significant effects, and yet it was getting harder to identify precisely what was done and found in each. How could we be confident about which phenomena were (and were not) real if we couldn't keep up with or even comprehend much of the literature we were supposed to be expert in?

Although we occasionally stumbled across papers expressing dissatisfaction with this or that aspect of empirical practice (power, sample size, null hypothesis statistical testing, etc.), such matters seemed discussed only on the fringes of our discipline by methodologists and statisticians with interests other than understanding psychological processes, per se. Meanwhile, most people seemed to be getting on with business as usual. We did not realise how much our private grumblings were increasingly chiming with a growing zeitgeist.

And then one of us joined Twitter and it became immediately apparent that we were not the only ones struggling. Large parts of our discipline (among others) seem to be in a parlous state. Here, we summarise the problems, as well as various proposed solutions. We hope it will be useful to those who have still not quite grasped the severity of the situation we seem to be in.

Our most fervent hope, though, is that our colleagues can help us. Even if things improve in the future, we want to know what knowledge can we justifiably claim now, e.g. when teaching, making policy recommendations, or seeking grants? One prominent neuroscientist recently suggested that all findings in his field from before 2011 should be more or less dismissed. Should we do similar with swathes of psychological research? Can we continue to make claims based on existing findings from "the science of psychology"? Or will we be rightly called out for bullshit?

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Inzlicht's lead? Many researchers and reviewers simply do not have the methodological or statistical expertise necessary to effectively engage in science the way it is currently practised in mainstream psychology (Colquhoun, 2014; Lindsay, 2015). Scientists and reviewers also increasingly admit that they simply cannot keep up with the sheer volume and complexity of things in which they are allegedly supposed to have

expertise (Siebert et al., 2015).

This has long been a problem: Peters and Ceci (1982) changed author names and affiliations and resubmitted 12 manuscripts to 12 high-quality psychology journals which had published the original manuscripts 18 to 32 months previously. The deceit was spotted in three cases. Eight of the remaining nine were rejected, in many cases because of what were identified as 'serious

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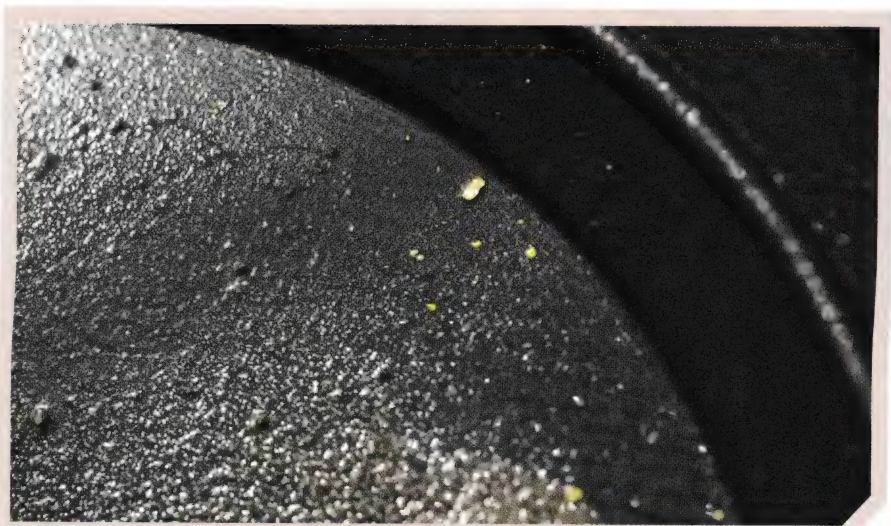
methodological flaws'. But as journals proliferate and incentives to publish increase, academic bloggers like Kevin Mitchell have noted that it becomes even more likely that quantity overwhelms quality (tinyurl.com/zg8sg3k).

Replication and revisionism

Few successful attempts have been made to rigorously replicate findings in psychology. Recent attempts to do so have suggested that even studies almost identical to original ones rarely produce reassuring confirmation of their reported results (e.g. Open Science Collaboration: see www.https://osf.io/vmrgu).

The task of replication is made tougher because researchers control what information reviewers get exposed to, and journal editors then shape what information readers have access to. If readers want further information, they usually have to request it from the researchers and they, their institution or the publishing journal may place limits on what is shared. One consequence of this is that other researchers are considerably hampered in their ability to attempt replication or extension of the original findings. James Coyne blogged last year (<http://tinyurl.com/hjohyp6>) about unsuccessful freedom of information requests to prompt the release of data to allow independent re-analysis of a study that was published in an outlet that explicitly promises such a possibility.

On the positive side, classic findings and interpretations of them that have until now been more or less accepted as 'common knowledge' in psychology are increasingly being challenged and revised (Jarrett, 2008). Yet established and often cherished beliefs are difficult to change. Even when incorrect claims are exposed in ways that should be fatal, they continue to have an influence on subsequent scholarship (Lewandowsky et al., 2012; Tatsioni et al., 2007). Trust in others' testimony is essential in science: this leads researchers and communicators



Panning for gold? Most prestigious journals also have a strong preference for novel and dramatic findings over the replications and incremental discoveries that are typical in an established science.

to report as truths phenomena and theories that they would almost certainly not believe if they critiqued them more thoroughly.

The system is screwed

Traditionally, researchers are much less likely to submit manuscripts reporting experiments that did not find an effect, and journals are far less likely to accept them if they do (Cohen, 1962; Peplow, 2014). Most prestigious journals also have a strong preference for novel and dramatic findings over the replications and incremental discoveries that are typical in an established science. If researchers want to be published in high-ranking peer-reviewed journals, therefore, they are highly incentivised to present highly selective and therefore misleading accounts of their research (Giner-Sorolla, 2012).

The current mechanisms of science production, then, place individual researchers in a social dilemma (Carter, 2015). Whatever others do and whatever the collective consequences, it is in the individual researcher's best economic interest to downgrade the importance of truth in order to maximise publications,

grants, promotion, media exposure, indicators of impact, and all the other glittering prizes valued in contemporary scientific and academic communities (Engel, 2015). This is especially the case when organisations and processes that might otherwise ameliorate such pressures instead exacerbate them because they too allow concerns for truth to be downgraded or swamped by other ambitions (e.g. journal sales, student recruitment, political influence, etc.) (Garfield, 1986).

Future perfect, bullshit present?

There are a lot of current initiatives that advocates claim will make psychology much more reliable and valid in the future. These include measures to improve researchers' methodological and statistical competence (Funder et al., 2014); change the sorts of statistical analyses they use (Cumming, 2014; Dienes, in press); provide pre-registration possibilities (Chambers et al., 2014); promote high-quality replications (Frank, 2015; Open Science Collaboration); facilitate open-access data and materials (Morey et al., 2015); encourage post-publication review (Nosek & Bar-Anan,

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2012); improve dissemination of information about corrections and retractions (Marcus & Oransky, 2011); and change incentive structures (Nosek et al., 2012).

Some are sceptical that all such initiatives will bring net gains (e.g. Blattman, 2015; Earp & Trafimow, 2015; LeBel et al., 2015; Sbarra, 2014). Although we have views on such things, our concern here is less with the future than with the present.

If a plethora of sweeping changes is required to achieve trustworthiness in psychological science in the future, what can psychologists claim on the basis of the research literature now? Are we lying or at best bullshitting when we tell students, grant-awarding bodies, policy makers, the public and each other about things that psychology has discovered (Lilienfeld, 2012; Matthews, 2015)? Are we disingenuous when we trumpet the epistemological superiority of so-called psychological science and its products (e.g. Bloom, 2015)? Given the multiple serious, widespread, and enduring problems we have, can we claim hand-on-heart to confidently know anything and, if so, how can we identify it among all the bullshit and lies?

As it happens, we do think that our discipline has a lot to offer. But we also think that norms of assessing and representing it need to change considerably if we are to minimise our at least complicit contribution to the collective production and concealment of yet more bullshit. Here are some provisional and tentative recommendations.

1. *Don't give up.* Meehl (1990) suggested that problems similar to those identified above make the psychological research literature 'well-nigh uninterpretable'. When convincing others of this, he reported that some gave up studying questions of importance and interest to

study things that were at least amenable to rigorous experimentation, while others used defence mechanisms so that they could carry on as normal and continue to reap rewards while avoiding a guilty conscience. Both strategies seem to us to be unattractive and unnecessary. We believe that psychology has the potential to make unique and important contributions to understanding important phenomena.

2. *Prioritise scholarship.* Psychologists and their institutions should do everything within their power to champion truth and to confront all barriers to it. If we have to choose between maintaining our professional integrity and obtaining further personal or institutional benefits, may we have the will (and support) to pursue the former.

3. *Be honest.* Championing truth requires honesty about ignorance, inadequacies, and mistakes (Salmon, 2003). Denying flaws helps no one, especially if our denials are accompanied by poorly received assertions of invincibility and superiority. Acknowledgement of weakness is a strength. Expertise should be in service of scholarship, not prioritised above it. Expertise idolatry risks encouraging defensive bullshit from the anxious and generating blinkered, dogmatic bullshit from specialists (Frankfurt, 2005; Ottati et al., 2015).

4. *Use all available evidence as effectively as possible.* Important as they are, experiments are neither necessary nor sufficient for empiricism, scholarship or 'science' (see Robinson, 2000). To study important phenomena well, we need first to identify what they are and what central characteristics they have (Rozin, 2001). To study things thoroughly, we need to identify processes and outcomes other than those derived from our pet 'theories'. Evaluating the research literature may

well require skills different from those that have been dominant during much of its production (Koch, 1981). In particular, we have found particularly effective accurately describing others' procedures and outcomes in ordinary language and then examining how well these justify the usually jargonistic 'theoretical' claims supposedly supported by them (cf. Billig, 2013).

5. *Nurture nuance.* Experiments within psychology are usually (at best) little more than demonstrations that something can occur. This is usually in service of rejecting a null hypothesis but it is almost as often misreported as suggesting (or showing or, worst of all, 'proving') something much more substantial – that something *does* or *must* occur. Perhaps the single most important thing psychology can do to quickly and substantially improve itself is to be much more careful about specifying and determining the boundary conditions for whatever phenomena it claims to identify (Ferguson, this issue; Lakens, 2014; Schaller, 2015).

6. *Triage.* Given that at least some areas of psychology seem awash with bullshit, we would be wise to prioritise evaluating topics of centrality and importance rather than on the basis that some reported findings are, for example, recent or amenable to testing using online experiments (Bevan, 1991). 'Far better an approximate answer to the right question, which is often vague, than an exact answer to the wrong question, which can always be made precise' (Tukey, 1962, pp.13–14).

The question we chose to head up this section is not rhetorical. We do not consider the recommendations we list as final or complete. Science is a social enterprise and we are interested to hear the views of others with perspectives different from ours. We are certain that something needs to be done, though. We're fed up with all the bullshit.

"can we claim hand-on-heart to confidently know anything?"

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'Curiosity is a pillar of academic performance'

Sophie von Stumm runs the Hungry Mind Lab at Goldsmiths, University of London. Jon Sutton poses the questions.

Tell me all about the Hungry Mind Lab.

I founded the Hungry Mind Lab in early 2014 to bring together my students and collaborators to jointly study individual differences in the interplay of intelligence and personality. Our research focuses in particular on factors or variables that influence learning, learning behaviours and knowledge attainment. We currently have nine members in our lab, who work across a wide range of projects – for example studying language development in toddlers, imagination in university students, or the relationship between mood and IQ. We use a wide range of methods, including longitudinal data analysis, experience-sampling methods and experimental designs, and we consider various scientific approaches, for example psychometrics, behavioural genetics, psychology and epidemiology.

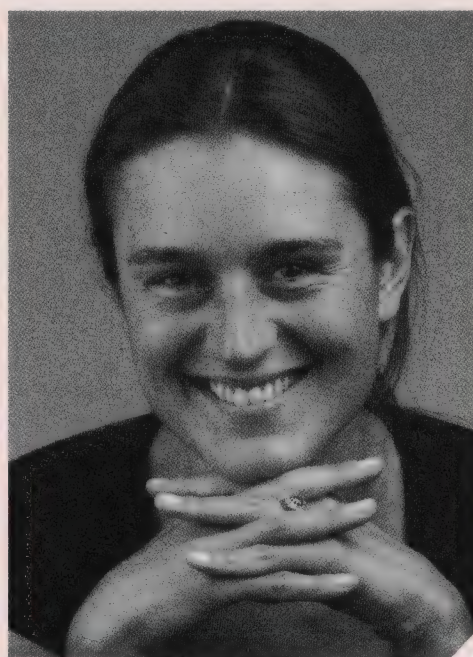
OK, so take something like imagination. Surely that's a tricky one to pin down?

Intuitively, yes, but we are hopeful that we'll get it nailed with the right set of psychometric tests. Specifically, we are combining implicit and explicit measurement approaches to assess imagination. Explicit tests ask people directly to rate or state who and what they are like, for example 'I am the life of a party' with the range from Totally Agree to Totally Disagree as answer options. By contrast, implicit tests try to get at that part of personality that we are not aware of, that is not available to introspection. Adapting this rationale, we have developed a test that measures automatic associations in memory between yourself and your characteristics – in this case imagination. These tests are known as 'implicit associations tests' and are administered on computers using an experimental trial

setup. We are very excited about our tests and to find out if it works – we will start piloting next week!

So what have you found so far in your studies of imagination?

We first conducted a thorough literature review on imagination, but we came back empty-handed – not much research has been published on this topic. We then



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wrote a press release to reach the general public. The response was amazing – we received letters, e-mails and phone calls from people who wanted to tell us about their imagination, from consultancy businesses that specialise in improving imagination, and from other scientists studying imagination. It crystallised

quickly that there is an enormous interest in imagination and that people differ greatly in imagination. For example, one father told us about his teenage daughter, who had never enjoyed story-time as a young child and also struggled with reading and verbal communication later, because she said she could not create mental images of what was said. This condition is known as 'aphantasia', which has only recently been recognised, and marks one extreme end of the imagination dimension. But we also had letters from people on the other end: for example, from the man who explained that he was compelled to regularly use LSD to satisfy his imagination, and from the woman who started to have the most colourful and vivid dreams day and night after her 50th birthday, although she'd never before had such experiences.

We took careful note of all these responses and experiences, because they will help us develop a theoretical model of imagination. Of course, they are mostly inspirations – and no substitute for producing reliable and valid empirical evidence.

Is technology pretty key to your approach?

We do work a lot on innovating assessment methods to advance the behavioural sciences. One reason for focusing on assessment is our belief that good measurement is the bone marrow of psychological science. The other reason is that extremely large samples are needed to produce reliable studies and reliable evidence about the causes and consequences of individual differences. Luckily we live in a time of constant technological innovation and advancement, and we take advantage of that where we can.

For example, we are currently recruiting families with two- to four-year-old children to participate in a study that uses digital language recorders to document all sounds in the child's environment for up to 16 hours. The language recorders are very small and are carried by the child in a special T-shirt pocket. The recordings are then analysed with automated algorithms that compute, for example, the number of words that the child has heard and the number of words that the child has spoken. With these data, we can then study the relationship between language environment and language development in early life.

Another example for the use of technology in assessment at the Hungry Mind Lab is moo-Q, an iPhone application that is freely available from

the App Store. It repeatedly assesses people's mood and IQ across time. After doing moo-Q five times, you get access to your personalised chart that plots your mood and brain function across hours, days and weeks. We developed the app to test if changes in mood were associated with changes in cognitive function – without using lab-based mood assessments that are biased. moo-Q was implemented by PSYT (psyt.co.uk), an amazing start-up company that specialises in developing software solutions for psychological research. We are now trying to get as many people as possible to download and use moo-Q – essentially, we are trying to crowd-sample for this research!

Your 'hungry mind' metaphor gets pretty literal when you look at the impact of meal type on cognitive performance in children. What did you find there?

It was a longitudinal study published in the journal *Intelligence* in 2012 of about 5000 Scottish children, who were assessed on IQ at age three and then again two years later at age five. Their mothers reported on dietary habits; in particular they listed how often their child ate a freshly prepared meal as the main meal of the day compared to a pre-fabricated meal, like frozen or take-away. This is of course a very crude way of looking at dietary differences; but nonetheless, we found that children who received more often freshly prepared meals had a higher IQ at age three, and also they showed greater IQ gains over time until age five. The effects were small but the results suggest that eating fresh foods is generally beneficial for cognitive development.

How does this relate to socio-economic status though? Isn't it the case that children of a lower socio-economic status start off disadvantaged in terms of IQ, and the gap then grows? When you add this to your thoughts on meal type, does that increase your concern that particular 'hungry minds' are not getting the nourishing they need?

Indeed this is what I think, although the socio-economic status-related differences that we observe in children's IQ are likely to be due to many more variables than plain diet. I recently published a study, also in *Intelligence*, on a very large sample of children from the UK, who had been assessed on IQ from the age of two years through to age 16. The data showed that children from less privileged family backgrounds scored six IQ points lower at age two than children from wealthier

families at age two, and by age 16 this gap had almost tripled. I think these results indicate that there is a complex nexus of variables associated with socio-economic status that have cumulative effects over time on children's cognitive development. Some of these variables we know of – for example, the quality of education that children receive, the stability of the home environment, and again nutrition that we mentioned before. What is less well understood is to what extent each of these variables contributes to cognitive growth, how many variables there are, how these variables interact, and if it is possible to improve children's cognitive outcomes by practical, cost-efficient interventions – by changing one or two of these variables.

How aware are people of their own individual differences?

That's a difficult question to give a simple answer to. On the one hand, we know ourselves pretty well. For example, self-report personality tests have been shown to have very good predictive validity for achievement outcomes, for example job performance and academic attainment. On the other hand, we are also fairly delusional about ourselves: we tend to suffer from what is called 'unrealistic optimism', for example when we expect outcomes that are much better than probability would dictate for ourselves.

We all tend to engage in 'unrealistic optimism' on a daily basis, but the effect becomes particularly evident when asking people about their levels of ability. For any task, may it be driving a car, writing an exam or recognising faces, people who did the worst overestimate their performance to the greatest extent – in fact, they claim they were top-level performers! Conversely, people who actually do well often underestimate their own performance.

Why do you think that might be?

I think there are two distinct reasons for these misestimations, although they may not be the ones we'd have thought of in the first instance. Bad performers overrate their performance, not because they don't want to admit they didn't do well, but because they don't know, don't realise how badly they did – it's called the double-curse of incompetence. By contrast, those who did well know exactly how well they did, for example because they know what answers on an exam they got right, but they overestimate how well other people do in the same task. Hence, they end up believing their own performance was only OK instead of great. This estimation error in task

performance translates into errors when we evaluate our own intelligence: people who score badly on IQ tests will tell you with greatest confidence that they came top, while the clever ones will be humble about their scores!

You've also applied the 'hungry mind' idea to your own academic development, and that of others.

I firmly believe that intellectual curiosity is a pillar of academic performance, alongside intelligence and effort. Many of my students and colleagues view my work on curiosity and my studies on IQ and socio-economic status as distinct or separate investigations. But I think they are highly related – curiosity is the core driver of individual differences in engaging with the environment, and engagement with the environment is what makes us learn and knowledgeable. Children from deprived backgrounds often have fewer opportunities to engage, and even if they are curious their engagement possibilities are likely to remain limited. And with that they often struggle to achieve their full intellectual potential.

However, a lot of my work in this area looks at university students and why some do better than others in terms of academic achievement. In 2011 I published a large-scale meta-analysis in *Perspectives on Psychological Science* that demonstrated for the first time that there was more to being an exceptional student than IQ and working hard. We found that intellectual curiosity made a substantial contribution to achievement, and we are currently running a series of experimental studies to identify the behavioural mechanisms that underlie the relationship between curiosity and knowledge.

What next for your own hungry mind?

We have two goals for the immediate future at our lab. For one, we want to produce a reliable measure of individual differences in imagination, and for the other we are waiting to complete the data collection on our language study, so we can start to identify specific environmental factors that influence language development in early life. In the long run, I hope that our work will inspire new cross-disciplinary research – in particular, I want to see our progress in 'phenotyping' behaviours, for example with the language recordings, be related to 'genotype data' that are currently much more developed. With this, I envisage that we will be able to better understand gene-environment correlations and interactions that give rise to individual differences in behaviour.



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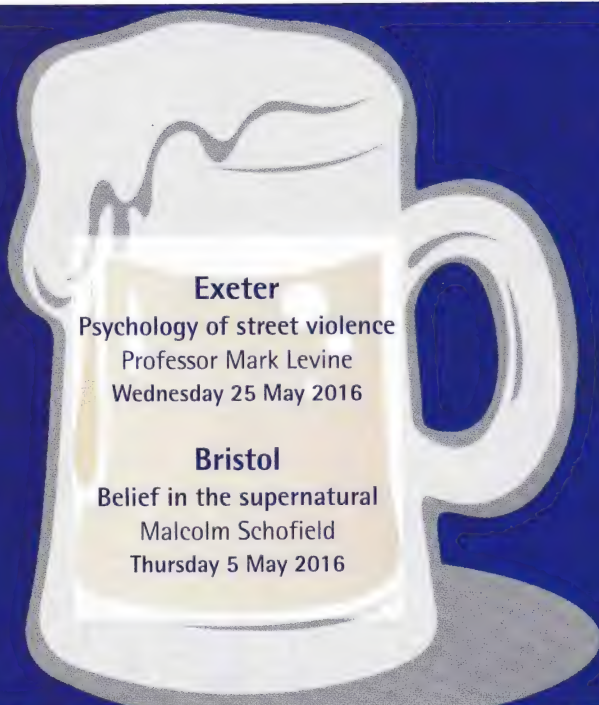
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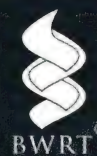
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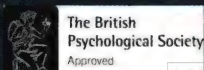
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Roland Michaud, DCPsych Senior Academic Co-ordinator, on 020 8579 2505 or at roland.michaud@metanoiaia.ac.uk

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From vitamins to showing loving kindness

How do those on the fringes of psychology view our profession?
Ian Florance meets Michèle Down

Psychology sometimes seems hermetically sealed from non-practitioners. The British Psychological Society's Fifth European Coaching Psychology Conference offered

counter-evidence: an event attended not only by chartered and student psychologists, but also those who use psychological techniques in their work, whatever their job titles or training.

I met Michèle Down at the conference and we arranged to talk a few weeks later in a coffee bar near Victoria Station. I wanted to get a feel for how psychological techniques inform work beyond its own professional boundaries. It was clear Michèle didn't fit into any neat categories.

'I have an unusually rich heritage,' Michèle told me. 'My father grew up in Rangoon and in turn was descended from Iraqi and Indian Jewish stock. My mum was brought up in Soho in the 1930s and was of Polish Jewish descent. I am the oldest of three girls.'

Michèle describes her first love as being drama. 'At school I wanted to be an actress but was realistic

enough to decide that I wasn't good enough to make it: excelling is important to me!' Interviewing for *The Psychologist*, I've met a number of people who took a route from training in a performing art, to being – for want of a better term – a mind worker. Why did Michèle think that was? 'Somatic therapy is becoming a more important element in what we all do, so that suggests a link. And much performance and sports training uses techniques which have been applied more widely in psychology and coaching.'

How did Michèle make the transition? 'My drama teacher was a real role model for me – young, vibrant, creative and inspirational. We stayed friends after I left school and went on to sixth form. She attended a workshop called De Silva Mind Control in the USA, and when it came over to the UK (then called Mind Dynamics) I attended. It was life-changing. I was introduced to the theories of positive thinking (à la Dale Carnegie), psychosynthesis and meditation amongst other things.'

Michèle had never wanted to go to university for its own sake but was advised by the two people running Mind Dynamics that she should become a teacher. 'I did a BED at Goldsmiths, planning to teach dance and English. I loved teaching but didn't like the predictability of the school timetable. I like variety and am strong-minded, so was probably pretty unemployable anyway – I still am! I intuitively felt that there was something different out there for me, though I didn't know what it was.'

Michèle then met an American businesswoman who was something of a pioneer: selling specialised food supplements and skin care door-to-door for a company associated with Werner Erhart, the founder of the then trendy 1970s EST movement and an early pioneer of extreme and much-criticised coaching methods. 'I went to San Francisco to train with the organisation, which partly involved selling vitamins door-to-door in San Francisco and Marin County – the best (and hardest) training

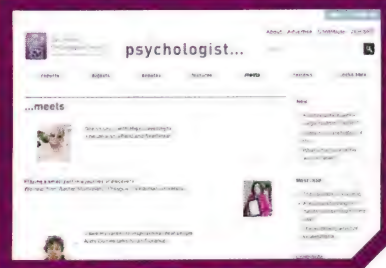


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I've ever had. When I got back, I set up Earthlore Ltd, selling, and finally manufacturing, a range of vitamins based in Chalk Farm. My husband joined me in the venture and we moved to Herefordshire, from where we ran the business. We were young, in a niche industry, eager to grow, with little capital, so looking to expand in some way. My eldest son's dairy intolerance led me to make carob Easter eggs... we became pioneers in the healthy confectionery market. To expand even more, we entered the world of mainstream chocolate manufacture. Eventually, we sold both businesses, and I remained as director of the confectionery business through the transition. Concurrently, another major life change convinced me to leave the business: what was I going to do next?

Michèle was a Samaritan at the time. 'It was something I really enjoyed. But our work didn't go far enough for me, particularly with people who were not in crisis. I retrained as a counsellor, taking a diploma at Newport. I loved every minute of it. At the end of the second year I wrote to everyone I could think of to ask if they needed a counsellor and in December I got a call from the Royal College for the Blind. Their student counsellor had gone off sick and they'd found my letter. Within two weeks I had 22 clients and ended up staying there for three years. It's the only salaried job I've ever had, and although I absolutely loved my client work, which I found deeply rewarding and enriching, I didn't like office politics or bureaucracy. I decided to work solely for myself once again.'

In parallel with this experience Michèle started teaching a basic counselling skills course for adults in Hereford, ran a BTEC in coaching and set up her private practice. Round about then she set up Michèle Down Dynamics (www.micheledowndynamics.co.uk), 'where I got particularly interested and involved in the trend of intensive leadership and teambuilding training in the UK and South Africa. I also wrote and ran training in standard areas such as assertiveness. But I began to miss the business world. It occurred to me in the end that my combination of business and counselling/coaching skills would be valuable.'

Michèle sees this issue as important for anyone from a psychology, counselling or coaching background working with any set of clients. 'You have to understand their experience and talk in a language they understand. This was true when I

worked with blind and visually impaired people; it's also true now I spend almost all my time coaching business leaders.'

Working with high achievers who have hit a stumbling block or feel they can achieve more, Michèle only works with five to six organisations at any one time. 'I have time and space to understand the ethos of each organisation making my work informed, relevant and meaningful. I help organisations to and through change. What I'm trying to do is help people find real quality of life at work, to discover meaning there, and in that way what I do has huge resonance with the positive psychology movement... I'm helping things get better and I stay the course.'

Michèle is now a registered British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy coach (in fact she is on the executive committee of the BACP's coaching division), with 17 years' experience of coaching and a successful business career behind her.

It can be argued that the Special Group in Coaching Psychology is the area of the Society most open to other professions. What did she make of the conference? 'I was interested, somewhat surprised and delighted, that people seemed to be talking the same language in their discussions after sessions. From the outside, psychologists seem to define themselves by schools, as types of

practitioner, as followers of a particular teacher. It was interesting to see so many of them agreeing over issues that needed to be addressed.'

Do you see yourself as a sort of psychologist, I ask? 'I am one of a growing group of therapists-who-coach. I'd describe myself as an integrative coach – someone who takes ideas and techniques from different places rather than just one school or even one discipline and integrates them into my own model of coaching. I feel as if all my life experiences have merged to inform my work – my business background, my insatiable curiosity about people, their thoughts feelings and motivations and my years' experience working deeply and psychologically to help people to change and grow.'

Is there anything else you feel coaches and psychologists share – or should share? 'Well, the creation of a trusting relationship with your client or patient is vital and underpins all the work we do. This can be challenging; although Rogers' "unconditional positive regard" is not always easy, unless you can accept your client for who they are, and unless they palpably feel that acceptance of their real selves, warts and all, how can they allow you to help them to change? We need to show our clients, for want of a better term, loving kindness as we help them to transform their lives for the better.'

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A journalistic eye

Liz Hollis, freelance journalist and media consultant specialising in psychology

Psychology is a particularly rich source of material for the media. Some of the most significant and high-profile news items are about psychology. The discipline also underlies a vast amount of media content in newspaper, magazine and digital publications too – often more than you would think. Indeed, a cursory look through today's newspapers reveals that most carry page-lead stories about research by Dr Lenny Vartanian from New South Wales University into clutter, chaos and overconsumption. Whether you are a staff writer, in PR or a freelancer, the media are always looking for an 'angle', a 'line' for their story.

My background as a qualified newspaper journalist and former features editor has equipped me with a finely honed journalistic eye for these hooks. Meanwhile, a mid-career break to complete a postgraduate diploma in psychology, combined with a huge interest in the subject, has found me increasingly turning that journalistic focus towards the discipline.

For the past seven years I have

worked as a freelance journalist and media consultant specialising in psychology. I write features, with their roots mostly in psychological research, for national papers, magazines and digital publications.

I also run my own media consultancy business, alongside the freelance journalism, advising clients on editorial strategy, disseminating research findings to the public, PR and communications – again specialising in psychology. This can involve turning research findings into press releases, looking for news angles in data, writing content for websites and social media and advising on PR.

One recent contract for a research organisation, producing reports that include data on children's mental health and wellbeing and their media use, involved trawling hundreds of pages of findings to mine for the lines that will catch media attention. Once identified, these news angles were written up as press releases and disseminated to national and trade media. I also dealt with media enquiries as they come in and liaised with the research director, helping



him respond to queries and handle interviews. The stories I had spotted made national headlines and it was satisfying to hear a live debate on Radio 5 Live and *BBC Breakfast* sparked by what was originally data in a research report.

My work as a freelance journalist involves communicating the findings of psychological research to the public in easily understood language. These are sometimes couched in abstruse language and hidden away in lengthy conclusions, pages of data or buried in subscription-only journals. Sometimes my work feels a little like being a translator, turning

A culture shock to the system

Nadine Mirza, MPhil student, University of Manchester

My first intensive clinical placement was for three months in the psychiatric department of a government hospital in Pakistan. I had just completed my bachelor's from Manchester, spending three years learning about psychological practice as it's done in the UK, ignoring all the jokes from my home country about how I was becoming a 'whitewashed' psychologist. In truth, having spent 10 years of my life living in Pakistan, I was very much in tune with how psychological practice occurred there. Regardless, I was still thrust into what can only be described as a form of culture shock when I began my placement.

Years of practised traditions and customs have led to all major aspects of the country, including health care, being heavily structured around cultural practices and norms. Therefore, it was

clear to me going into the job that psychological welfare and ethical practice, while regarded with high esteem, were overruled ultimately by traditional expectations. With emphasis on the importance of creating and maintaining a family unit at the forefront, when assigned a patient it was generally a given that you were also responsible for three or four accompanying family members. They deemed it their duty to be present at all sessions that more often than not extended beyond the recommended psychoeducation and family counselling. While being aware of this natural behaviour in mental health practice back home, I was yet to be exposed to its more sinister side.

Of course, this highly accepted family involvement could suggest a positive step towards families rallying around

individuals suffering from mental health difficulties. They are expressing a deep-found interest that goes beyond a societal taboo of mental health and fanatical assumptions deep rooted in the culture, such as black magic – a prevailing belief in rural communities. Family and friends find themselves gaining firsthand knowledge of mental health issues and how to prevent or manage them. However, a more profound analysis could bring into question whether society's preference for family involvement may in fact be causing more damage than not.

When working with patients I was expected to never second guess the personal involvement of parents, siblings and even aunts and uncles, who would sit in on privileged sessions with or without the patient's consent. Whether the patient was comfortable with their grandfather sitting in on their private consultations was of little regard. All that mattered was keeping the family unit solid, even if at the cost of privacy. In the UK this would be a serious breach of ethics, but in Pakistan, where tradition means to be family oriented as

academic-speak into specific, user-friendly language for the media without losing the meaning.

Commissions are many and varied and have included covering the British Psychological Society's Annual Conference for the national press, writing about the psychology of whistleblowing for *The Guardian*, interviewing Daniel Kahneman for *Psychologies* magazine; writing about the paradox of choice for *The Times* and the psychology of saying sorry for a feature in *Management Today*. I cover all branches of the discipline, but I am particularly interested in consumer, health and sports psychology.

Ultimately, my job is all about finding 'the story' in psychology research, reading journals and conference papers, talking to psychologists, maybe bringing two or more pieces of research together, and then spotting what journalists call 'the line'.

My career as a journalist began as a cub reporter on a regional daily paper, the *Eastern Daily Press*. This is the coalface of journalism, where you hone your journalistic eye reporting on council meetings and debates over wheelie bin collections and bypass campaigns, while working towards the National Council for the Training of Journalists certificate.

After several years on the local beat I worked as a feature writer at *Health & Fitness* magazine, in London, and then as features editor for a leading press agency

filing stories daily to national newspapers and magazines. I eventually decided to go freelance to take full advantage of the freedom and opportunities it could offer. To earn a living as a freelance you have come up with literally hundreds of ideas for possible features every month and I have always found psychology to be the richest and most interesting vein.

I have always enjoyed reading deeper and wider than writing a newspaper feature required, and it was this curiosity that convinced me to convert my philosophy and French degree with a postgraduate diploma in psychology. After three years of part-time study I was pleased with a first-class distinction, and membership of the British Psychological Society has been an added bonus, which has motivated me to specialise in psychology in my media consultancy business (see www.lizhollis.co.uk).

A deeper understanding of research methodology gained from studying psychology has also been beneficial and, I like to think, helps with accuracy and better questions when interviewing psychologists. However, one of the challenges always remains the fundamental tension between the media's desire for novelty and simple correlation on the one hand, and the very nature of the scientific method with its convolution and lengthy time frame on the other. There is an inevitable conflict between

psychologists and journalists writing stories about the discipline. Psychologists are circumspect, guarded and slowly accumulate complex research data. Journalists want it simple, bite-sized and accessible with quick headlines that convey the latest and the new. They make the simple assumption that correlation is causation, since cause and effect is easy to communicate and leads to advice readers can transfer to everyday life. Hence the almost impossible task of turning years of careful psychological study with a guarded conclusion into a user-friendly title: a decade of psychology lab research on attention, self-control and eating behaviour is reduced to the likes of 'Calling a food healthy can actually put people off eating it, researchers have warned.'

The tension between psychology and research will always exist, but I hope my background helps bridge the gap when I write about the discipline. I try to bring in as much of the nuance and bigger picture as possible, but I'm still mindful of the consumer-focused need for 'a story', which ultimately helps communicate psychology and its research and understanding to a wider public.

So while psychology and journalism are not obvious stablemates in a career, for me they have come together and allowed me to specialise in a discipline I find endlessly interesting and absorbing.

opposed to self-oriented, this conduct is par for the course.

One woman would have her husband accompany her to every session, and it did not seem conceivable to him when it was suggested that his wife may want to discuss her issues in private. She eventually stopped coming in for her therapy because her husband didn't have time for it and I was bound, both professionally and culturally, to accept this. Such instances are common and generally acceptable. Another young woman, dressed conservatively and displaying an unassuming demeanour, was only able to discuss her active and secret sex life and how it was affecting her after her parents were persuaded, with much difficulty, to leave the room. When they later demanded to know what their daughter had said in their absence I was encouraged by superiors to break privilege as it was their parental right, despite their daughter being



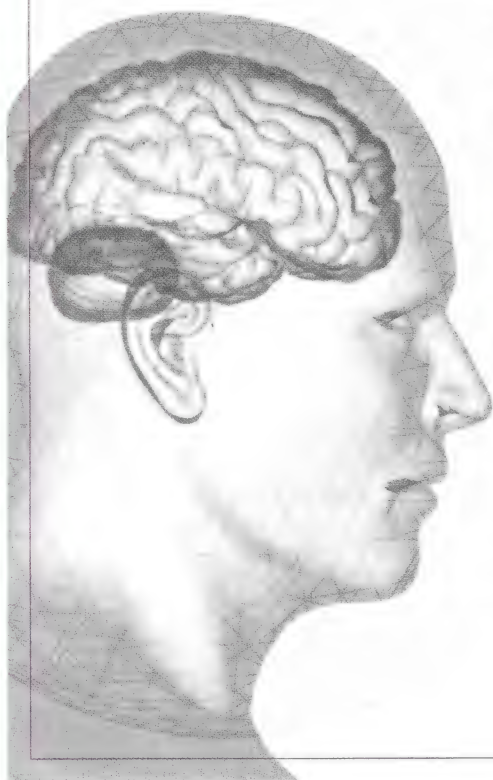
over 20 years old. It is an unspoken rule in the culture that being a legal adult hardly means anything when it comes to parental emancipation.

One's own professional conduct is often called into question when dragged into these political games. One patient, upon confessing he had been raped by his cousin during a session, received conflicting reactions of comfort and judgement and anger from his parents. In that situation, from a professional standpoint, you are not at a liberty to begin challenging the parents of your charge. From an ethical standpoint however, would it not have been beneficial for your patient to separate him from his parents? Or simply not have them present in the first place? In the end policy dictated the psychologist remain neutral and impartial, even if that

meant letting the parents force their son into forgiving and further interacting with his rapist.

Family values, whatever those values may be, seemed to trump mental health each and every time. Never was this more heavily ingrained into my brain than when I saw my severely depressed catatonic patient being yelled at by his mother for bringing shame to the family and ruining his chances at becoming a doctor. She then had her son removed from the ward without his consent, despite the fact that he was legally an adult and a high risk for suicide. To this day I do not know what became of him... should I have called his mother out on being the stressor in her son's life? I played the passive professional, submitting to the family member's wishes, which did that young man no favours.

Ultimately I questioned not just the ethics of practising in Pakistan, but my own ethics and potentially compromised morality. How far should cultural practices and traditions be allowed to venture into psychological practice before a line must be drawn?



Advertising opportunities in 2016

CPL has been appointed by the British Psychological Society and we are very excited to be your point of contact for all advertising. CPL is an award-winning full service agency that was established in 1996.

In early 2016 we will be launching a new appointments website. It will be accessible on mobiles and desktops, with increased search functionality, greater ease of use and navigation. It will also have many more targeted options to allow you to promote your roles to members and other visitors to www.psychapp.co.uk.

You will be happy to hear that all recruitment advertisers in the print edition of *The Psychologist* will continue to have their adverts included on the new appointments site.

To discuss the opportunities for advertising and promotion in *The Psychologist*, www.psychapp.co.uk and *Research Digest*, please contact Matt Styrka on 01223 273 555 or email matt.styrka@cpl.co.uk.

Upcoming issues	Display advert deadline	Appointment section deadline	Publication date
June	27 April	4 May	19 May
July	25 May	1 June	16 June

CPL
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The British Psychological Society
Promoting excellence in psychology



IAPT Postgraduate Diploma in CBT

Are you a qualified Clinical or Counselling Psychologist? Have you considered training in cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and getting paid to do it? With the IAPT postgraduate diploma you could be taught by some of the leading CBT experts in the field and become an accredited CBT therapist.

The London PG Diploma in CBT is a one year full-time course based at either King's College London or Royal Holloway. This course is currently part of the Department of Health's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) initiative. Trainees on the course will work in IAPT services whilst being trained in evidence-based CBT for adults with depression and anxiety disorders.

Please visit the King's College London (www.tinyurl.com/cbtcourse) or Royal Holloway (www.nwlcbttraining.net) website for more information and to apply.

The application process is open from 25 April - 9 May 2016 with interviews taking place in June/July 2016.



Head of Psychology

The Irish Prison Service is responsible for the safe and secure detention of persons in custody. The Psychology Service forms part of the Care and Rehabilitation Directorate and applies psychological research, principles and skills to the needs of the Service. The Head of Psychology will provide overall strategic direction and leadership.

The ideal candidate will:

- Be eligible for graduate membership of the Psychological Society of Ireland and hold a relevant postgraduate professional qualification in psychology;
- Have a proven record in leadership, decision making and people management skills;
- Have excellent professional knowledge and skills;
- Have a clear understanding of evidence based best practice in relation to psychological services for prisoners.



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An tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí
Public Appointments Service

The closing date for receipt of applications for this post is Thursday 5th May 2016

For more information and how to apply, visit www.publicjobs.ie

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Cuirfear fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge



Job Title: Senior Lecturer in Forensic Psychology
Employer: Department of Applied Psychology, Cardiff Metropolitan University

'We are definitely looking for a team player,' says Lalage Sanders, Head of Applied Psychology. 'We hold regular planning days where we meet up to review our progress and to agree our departmental objectives.'

Sanders says that to call this purely a teaching or lecturing job is to undersell it. 'This is a new role and we're looking for an HCPC registered practitioner who wants to get involved in teaching in our expanding forensic psychology portfolio. We encourage and support our practitioners to maintain their professional skills and registration.'

Work on the postgraduate diploma will involve travelling around the UK to supervise students where they work. The MSc, like the Department, is based at the Llandaff campus in one of the most attractive parts of the bustling city of Cardiff. 'The MSc Forensic Psychology is focused on critical debate; the department and our students welcome someone with their own views who is prepared to advance new ideas.' This is a taught programme, though dissertations are often based in applied settings.

'We're a very enthusiastic, rapidly developing and research active department,' Sanders continues. 'Our postgraduate provision focuses on Forensic, Health and Research. Once someone has met the basic requirements there are no real restrictions on who applies. We'd love to talk to people who want to contribute actively to our future.'



Cardiff Metropolitan University
 Prifysgol Metropolitan Caerdydd

JOB TITLE: SENIOR LECTURER IN FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY
POST NUMBER: NH100XX
LOCATION: CARDIFF SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES
GRADE: 8AB
SALARY: £43,758 - £50,702 PER ANNUM
TENURE: PERMANENT
HOURS: 37 PER WEEK

Cardiff School of Health Sciences seeks to appoint a Senior Lecturer in Forensic Psychology to join the existing team.

The successful candidate will be able to deliver teaching and supervision for the MSc in Forensic Psychology, the Post-Graduate Diploma in Forensic Practitioner Psychology and the Doctorate in Forensic Psychology; to deliver those aspects of the BSc Psychology curriculum commensurate with skills and abilities as required; to develop, supervise and support the work-placement elements of the forensic programmes in the Department of Applied Psychology.

The successful candidate will be HCPC Registered Forensic Psychologist and have the ability to achieve Fellow Status as part of the Higher Education Academy's Professional Recognition scheme, within agreed timescales.

For informal enquiries, please contact Nic Bowes, Senior Lecturer in Forensic Psychology nbowes@cardiffmet.ac.uk or Lalage Sanders, Head of Applied Psychology lsanders@cardiffmet.ac.uk.

CLOSING DATE FOR RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS IS WED 11TH MAY 2016

Interview Date:
24th May 2016

Oxford University Hospitals 
 NHS Foundation Trust

Psychological Medicine, John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford

Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist

Job Ref: 321-VP-392-A

Salary: Band 8c £56,104 - £68,484 pa (spot point to be agreed) Hours: f/t 37.5 pw

A whole time Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist is sought at the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. You will undertake general and specialist clinical neuropsychological assessment, rehabilitation and mental health interventions within the Neurosciences Directorate, which supports a population of 3.5m and comprises 42 neurologists and 8 neurosurgeons.

You'll be interested in developing and/or consolidating sub-speciality expertise in epilepsy surgery and glioma resection. There will be the option to apply for additional clinical management and leadership responsibility, as lead consultant for Neuropsychology.

This post represents an exciting opportunity to lead on consolidation and further integration within Neurosciences within the relatively newly established Department of Psychological Medicine, providing an innovative service that is both truly integrated with psychiatry but also with acute surgical and medical services.

Oxford is home to one of the oldest and most prestigious Universities in the world and the location of many historical landmarks. It is a vibrant and multicultural city with a wide variety of educational and

recreational activities and easy access to beautiful countryside. Oxford also has excellent rail and road links to Heathrow and all of London's amenities.

Candidates are highly recommended to visit the department and hospital and are invited to contact **Ian Baker**, Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist, email: ian.baker@ouh.nhs.uk and/or **Professor Michael Sharpe**, Consultant Psychiatrist and Trust Lead for Psychological Medicine, email: michael.sharpe@psych.ox.ac.uk

Closing Date: 8 May 2016 Interview Date: 19 May 2016

To apply and gain further details of this post, go to <http://jobs.ouh.nhs.uk> and click on the 'Allied Health Professionals'.

www.ouh.nhs.uk



Orchard House Family Assessment and Intervention Centre and Healthcare South West Ltd Clinical Psychologists – posts between Band 7 and 8c

Adult and Child mental health • Health psychology to include pain management • Family assessment and intervention

Our services

Orchard House Family Assessment and Intervention Centre provides residential and community based parenting, psychological and other related assessments.

Healthcare South West Ltd provides responsive psychological services for adults and children who have psychological, mental health and complex medical problems.

Opportunities

Due to a significant expansion in services, there are exciting new opportunities for both experienced and newly qualified clinical psychologists to join our dynamic and multi-disciplinary service in Somerset.

The post holders will work across both companies, providing:

- High quality evidence based assessment and intervention to NHS, local authority and privately funded patients. We provide services for adults, children and for patients with complex medical problems.
- Training, advice and consultancy to the multidisciplinary team. For experienced post holders there are opportunities to contribute to professional supervision and service development.

We are hoping to recruit committed and enthusiastic psychologists committed to evidence-based practice and psychological codes of conduct. You may be a clinical psychologist looking for a different challenge or about to complete your training.

What you can expect

CPD, supervision and career development are fully supported by the company.

Posts between pay band 7 and 8c; we offer competitive remuneration packages, commensurate with experience and expertise. We will also contribute to relocation fees. We will consider candidates who are seeking promotion.

For an application pack please email info@healthcaresw.com or phone 01823 351785.

Closing date 29th May, however early application is encouraged as shortlisting and interviews will take place sooner if sufficient applications are received.

These posts will be subject to an enhanced DBS check

www.healthcaresw.com | www.orchardhousefac.co.uk



The Encephalitis Society

Support, Awareness & Research for Inflammation of the Brain



Seeking a New Opportunity with Dynamic and Energetic Charity?

Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist

Salary: £55,000 per annum + 6% pension

Hours: Part Time – 20 Hours (initial 2-year contract)

Deadline: 5pm 27th May 2016

The Encephalitis Society aims to improve the life of all people affected by encephalitis, and is based in Malton, North Yorkshire.

The Society is a small but dynamic and challenging organisation that has an excellent reputation. This is an exciting role and service within The Society with a variety of responsibilities such as the following key areas:

- Providing highly specialist psychological assessment and therapy that meets the needs of our Members, utilising a variety of approaches.
- Supervising non-clinical members of the Support Staff Team and offering advice and consultation on clients' psychological and social care.
- Writing, reviewing and delivering information on encephalitis and its consequences for patients, professionals and the general public.
- Contributing to encephalitis research within The Society and with our medical and academic partners.

For more information visit:

www.encephalitis.info/recruitment or email mail@encephalitis.info



The Encephalitis Society - Neuropsychology Service

Senior Educational Psychologist / Educational Psychologist Leicestershire County Council



Leicestershire
County Council

Permanent appointments, full-time and part-time applications considered

Leicestershire's Educational Psychology Service has a long-standing and strong commitment to applying psychological research to improve the educational outcomes of vulnerable young people throughout childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

Applications are invited for the post of Senior Educational Psychologist/ Locality Manager. This is a key leadership appointment which requires the post holder to manage a team of educational psychologists, contribute to the leadership of the Service at strategic and operational levels and work collaboratively with other partner agencies. The Senior EP post is paid at Soulbury Scale B, 3 to 6 with 3 SPA points for eligible candidates.

Applications are also invited for the post of Educational Psychologist (Soulbury Scale A, points 6 to 8 with 3 SPA points additionally available). The successful candidate will promote the use of evidence-based psychological research to address concerns about children's development, well-being and academic progress 0 to 25 years.

Essential Requirements for both posts:

- Registered with Health and Care Professions Council to work as an educational psychologist
- Knowledge of current legislation, safeguarding regulations and other guidance as relevant to the job role of an educational psychologist
- A commitment to ensure local children have the best possible learning environment and opportunities within his or her local school
- Able to travel within and beyond Leicestershire to undertake work with and for young people
- A professional determination to participate in and contribute to personal as well as whole Service developments
- A DBS enhanced check.

Leicestershire County Council is seeking to promote the employment of disabled people and will make any adjustments considered reasonable to accommodate a suitable disabled candidate. Please contact Anne Matthews, Service Manager, for more information.

Tel. 0116 305 5100 Email: anne.matthews@leics.gov.uk

Closing date for applications: Tuesday, 31st May

www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council/our-jobs-and-careers



Carter Brown
The Expert Service

Part of the Core Assets Group

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If you think your assessment expertise could assist the courts in making their decisions, we'd be interested in working with you.

Carter Brown is the largest multidisciplinary expert witness service, known for providing high-quality reports to family and criminal courts throughout the country.

We need **experienced psychologists** to join us on a self-employed basis. We'll give you the support you need to get started in this rewarding field and you can work for us alongside other commitments.

What we ask for:

- experience in assessing adults, or both adults and children
- membership of the Health and Care Professions Council
- psychology doctorate or at least 5 years' clinical experience
- professional indemnity and public liability insurance
- an enhanced DBS (criminal record) check
- a telephone interview and attendance at our induction day

What we can offer:

- guaranteed payment within a set timescale
- marketing to our loyal solicitor and barrister clients
- a caseload suited to your availability
- admin support during cases
- quality assurance of your reports
- training, peer review, support and advice
- security in knowing that you're working with the experts

If you think you'd fit the bill, we'd love to hear from you.

The first step is to send your CV to sally.astill@carterbrownexperts.co.uk by email or online at www.carterbrownexperts.co.uk/become-an-expert.

Change your career. Change someone's life.

Assistant Psychologist (Support) Clinical Services, Adult and Children Services

SALARY: £19,793 PA • 37.5 HOURS/WK
6 WEEKS' PAID HOLIDAY

Established in 1975, the Hesley Group provides flexible, specialist residential services and schools. We aim to offer the best possible care, education and vocational opportunities for young people and adults, often with autism, who have a learning disability and complex needs including behaviour which may challenge.

We are now seeking to appoint a number of Assistant Psychologists (Support) to work within our children services at Wilsic Hall School. There are also opportunities to work in our other children and adults services. You will work as part of a multi-disciplinary team to provide a link between care, education and our clinical teams.

We'll expect you to live and breathe our values by ensuring we take a person-centred approach that's driven by quality and focused on positive outcomes. You will be a skilled practitioner who is able to build effective professional relationships with our key internal and external stakeholders. Partnership with families and facilitating the voice of the people we support are priorities of our service.

You will be providing direct care to an identified individual with complex needs which will include shift work, this will be for around 75 % of your time. The rest of your time will be spent on work directed by a Clinical team, for example, developing support plans, collecting and analysing data, writing reports, developing staff training and developing resources. You will work as part of a team of Assistant Psychologists (Support) across the group.

You should have a Bachelors degree in Psychology or other relevant degree at 2:1 or above. You should also have a Diploma in Health and Social Care Level 3 (or this must be achieved within one year of appointment to post). You should have relevant experience of working with people with complex needs or people whose behaviour can challenge services.

In return, we offer a commitment to regular supervision from a Clinical Psychologist or a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst. We offer outstanding continuing professional development opportunities via our tailored Assistant Psychologist (Support) CPD programme in addition to in-house induction and training.

For an informal conversation, please contact the Recruitment team on 01302 866906.

For more information on any of our vacancies or to apply online, visit our website at www.hesleygroup.co.uk/content/current-vacancies Alternatively, for an application pack please email:

recruitment@hesleygroup.co.uk stating your full name and address or telephone 01302 861666 quoting the reference **HO/04/AP(S)/16**.

Closing date for receipt of postal and online applications:

noon, 3rd May 2016.

Online applications submitted after 12pm (noon) on the closing date will be rejected by the system.

Hesley Group is an Equal Opportunities employer. This post is subject to an enhanced level disclosure and barring check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE



Craig against the machine

This is a book that will be a shock to many students and trainees in psychology and psychiatry, for it shows how dangerous the machinery they are being inducted into actually is. And not only to beginners; it will confirm what many of us long suspected, that a psychological explanation for our distress is not much more progressive than the biological reductionist agendas of traditional psychiatry. Furthermore, the book deals with many of the attempts by

psychotherapists and counsellors to play the game of their elders and betters in the psy complex. Here the argument of the book is more nuanced, and we are alerted both to the brutal physical abuse that psychiatry has historically visited upon those it claims to cure and to the need for a compassionate and therefore limited attempt to support those who are labelled as 'mentally ill'. The limits are set by what is actually possible, and the work that a counsellor or psychotherapist is enjoined to carry out is one of empathic engagement. Numerous examples of this kind of work are offered in passing as we are led on a tour of the worst of psy practice.

The book is an impassioned critique of that machinery grounded in clinical practice and in an impressive range of research resources. Newnes aims to demystify the 'psy' industry, and he does this by describing in a clear way the ways in which it has developed and the way it functions today. This is an academic and professional industry that is interlinked with the imperatives of capitalist society, and so the book attends not only to the powerful economic drivers for an increasingly pernicious individualisation of social problems but also to the economic forces that produce so much psychological misery in the first place.

This is an unusual text in a number of respects, for it contextualises the debates in personal experience, many of which will resonate with the reader, whether they are

practitioners, researchers or relatively new to what they might genuinely believe to be a 'helping profession'. Theoretical frameworks are described to enable us to make sense of the wounds inflicted on patients, as is the way treatment mutates into assault. Here the book pursues a tightly argued agenda for critical participation and empowerment. The book contextualises the debates reflexively, that is to say, by allowing the reader into the process of knowledge-construction, to the writing of the book. This

is by way of events that have a bearing on the arguments in the book and by way of curious tasting notes which tell us something about what substances were ingested or what music was playing as the text was keyed in. Something of the machinery of critique, financial and sensual, is thus laid bare as well as the apparatus of the psy complex that is the focus of the book.

On the one hand, we are told how someone who is working in one of the ever-expanding psy professions might take seriously Newnes's critique without losing heart; and it should be emphasised that this is an angry rather than a pessimistic book. It is cynical about the claims of psychiatry and psychology to make things better, but not about the attempts of critical psychiatrists and psychologists to challenge mainstream thinking and practice. On the other hand, we are able to see why attempts to ameliorate abuse can only be successful if they make alliances with those who use psychological services. Here Newnes also provides links to a range of organisations that bring together service users and critical professional allies. What will strike some readers is the multiplicity of critical alternatives, and it is clear that not all can be mentioned.

This is a scholarly contribution that exposes, not for the first time but in a way that is accessible and enjoyable and up to date, how psychiatry and psychology works, the material conditions under which it has been formed and the forms of resistance that might be elaborated to combat it.

Palgrave Macmillan; 2016; Hb £63.00

Reviewed by Professor Ian Parker who is Professor of Management at the University of Leicester

Developing network theories



Macroneural Theories in Cognitive Neuroscience
William R. Uttal

William R. Uttal provides a compelling read and captures the reader's attention as he discusses controversial and complex issues within the field of neural network theories. Despite the title, there are actually three chapters before any detailed discussion of macroneural theories themselves. The first section of the book provides the reader with a useful background on the development of theories in cognitive neuroscience. This would be useful to a novice, helping in understanding the complex discussions in later chapters.

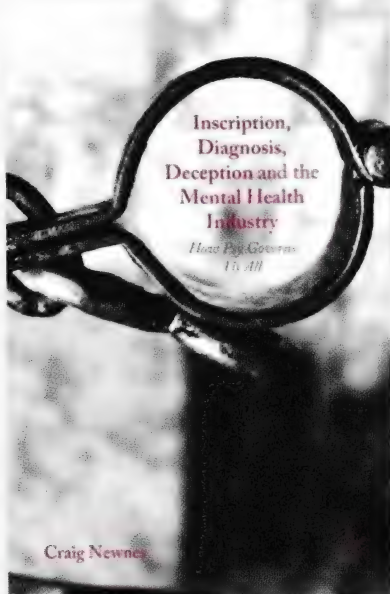
Uttal offers an insightful overview of functional neural networks and succeeds at highlighting the pitfalls of creating network theories from fMRI data. The book could be taken as giving a somewhat negative view of the field. It would have been beneficial to make more of an acknowledgement throughout of the valuable information that can be gained from neural network research and data from other sources (e.g. electrophysiology in animals).

Uttal puts forward an interesting concept, that nodes within a functional network do not need to be localised anatomically. This idea could provide a new insight into brain networks from the perspective of distributed processes as nodes, rather than the heavily studied localisation of function. Each chapter provides well-written and well-supported arguments for the current problems in the development of network theories, specifically relevant to cognitive neuroscientists.

Macroneural Theories in Cognitive Neuroscience is an interesting read and enables network scientists to consider controversial topics in great detail.

Psychology Press; 2016; Pb £31.99

Reviewed by Stacey A. Bedwell who is at the Division of Psychology, Nottingham Trent University



Inscription, Diagnosis, Deception and the Mental Health Industry: How Psy Governs Us All
Craig Newnes



Glorious... worth absorbing

My Beautiful Broken Brain
Lotje Sodderland, Sophie Robinson (Directors)

When I teach undergraduates what head injuries have taught us about the functioning of the brain, there is a clean, unrealistic quality to the descriptions available in textbooks. Clinical neuropsychology operates through the reassuring logics of double dissociation and localisation of function. There is a familiar canon of cases, many of whom are long dead and easy to underestimate: Phineas Gage, 'Tan', H.M. The most common response from students is that such cases are 'cool', and I tend to notice a gruesome fascination at play. They are right in some sense: it is staggeringly interesting to see how damage to the brain undoes us, and it is wonderful to learn thereby how it usually holds us together.

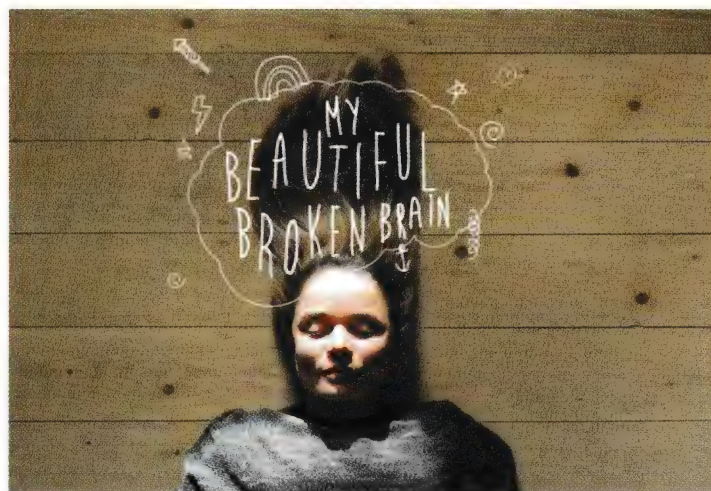
But there is also a sense in which my students are wrong. There is nothing 'cool' about brain injury, least of all a stroke at age 34, which is what Lotje Sodderland set out to record in this utterly beguiling film. It is a banality to say that, in the clinical psychological sciences, the person can get left out. Saying so is easy, but how do you put them back in again? How do you capture the pathos and disorientation, and the deep sense of the uncanny that accompanies brain injury in a real human being? Despite the profundity of the experience, cheapness and exploitation is a dangerous potential side-effect of trying to wring a story out of tragedy.

My Beautiful Broken Brain makes something remarkable out of something awful; like the best understanding gleaned from clinical neuropsychology, this is catastrophe turned opportunity, but the voice

is not that of a clinician or experimenter drawing inferences. Instead it is a highly personal recounting of a whole phenomenological experience, from horror to wonderment. Through it all Sodderland's determination, humour and profound curiosity illuminates everything.

The film opens with the terror of the early stages of a stroke. We hear from her bewildered relatives, who entered her deserted flat (Sodderland had taken herself to hospital, disoriented and alone) to find 'faeces and vomit everywhere'. Here is Lotje staring into her smartphone camera, one eye closed, and here she is losing her capacity to retrieve the word 'record', and confusing 'nephew' for 'niece'; pulling them out of mind after an almost physical struggle. A sociable and passionate young woman, it seems like Sodderland has lost everything ('It's beyond terrifying,' she heartbreakingly says) and it is frequently painful to behold.

But while something is lost, something else has survived. Sodderland retained her film-maker's desire to record life. 'I'm obsessed with recording everything, and I'm unable to remember everything...you're just terrified that it's going to get lost', she tells Sophie Robinson, the director she invited to collaborate on this piece. She thinks in film,



and lends her talent to fleshing out the phenomenology of visuospatial neglect ('If I go on the right side it's like a whole other dimension'), likening her experience to the bizarre universe of David Lynch (who acted as executive producer). She jokes too. Being taken to an inpatient neurological ward for rehabilitation, she downplays the evident dread at her imminent solitude, 'I've got no sense of space and time, so it's alright for me.'

My Beautiful Broken Brain is a glorious addition to the genre of 'first person accounts', but it also feels much more than that. Much like *The Man With a Shattered World*, this is self-authored case study; documentary as 'romantic science'. It should be filed alongside Luria and his literary inheritor Oliver Sacks, and all psychologists should absorb it.

I Reviewed by Huw Green who is a PhD student and trainee clinical psychologist based in New York



Balm for your splintered soul?

8 Keys to Forgiveness
Robert Enright

While what is considered fair or just varies across culture and history, humans, across the world, feel peeved, angry or vengeful when injustice is meted out to them. Whether or not we take revenge, in word or deed, most of us are aggrieved when we are wronged. And, very often, angry thoughts simmer in our minds long after the misdeed or offence was committed. In a sense, we then become victims of our own negativity, as bitterness or resentment gnaw at our emotional cores.

In order to break free from our inner turmoil, Robert Enright suggests that we practise forgiveness. In *8 Keys to Forgiveness*, Enright explains why and how pardoning our offender can be cathartic. From helping incest survivors cope with depression, to cardiac patients exhibiting indices of healthier hearts, to victims of PTSD showing fewer anxious symptoms, forgiveness therapy has far-reaching consequences. While the author also provides a few case studies to illustrate the transformative power of forgiveness, they are rather short and sketchy. The case studies would have had

a stronger impact if they had been etched in more detail.

The author delineates eight keys or steps as one progresses on the forgiveness journey. As the book is part of a larger 8 Keys series, the reader should not take the number eight literally as the chapters have been chalked out to fit into the series format. The author also anticipates how hard it can be to forgive but coaxes the reader to press on and provides exercises that can help a person become 'forgivingly-fit'. As this book is written as self-help, its touchy-feely tone is unlikely to win over sceptics of the self-improvement industry. But if you are open to the idea that forgiveness can heal, then this book may be the right balm for your splintered soul. The author also explains how forgiveness not only helps the individual, but can affect generations to come.

I W.W. Norton & Co.; 2015; Pb £9.99

Reviewed by Aruna Sankaranarayanan who is Director, PRAYATNA, a centre for children with learning difficulties in India



Sting like a bee

I Am the Greatest: Muhammad Ali at the O2
O2 Arena

I have wrestled with an alligator, I done
tussled with a whale.
I done handcuffed lightning, throw'd
thunder in jail.
That's bad.
Only last week I murdered a rock,
injured a stone, hospitalized a brick.
I'm so mean, I make medicine sick.

Born Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr, Muhammad Ali went on to become one of the most recognisable figures in the history of sport. Named *Sports Illustrated's* Sportsman of the Century in 1999, there is no doubt that Ali is a sporting icon for the ages. In 1964, at just 22 years old, Ali (still known as Cassius Clay at the time) became Heavyweight Champion of the World. Three years later, having joined the Nation of Islam and changed his name, Ali refused to be drafted into the US military to fight in Vietnam. He was charged with draft evasion, stripped of his boxing title and passport, and was denied a boxing licence in every US state. For almost four years, during what would have been the peak of his athletic career, he was denied the opportunity to compete, yet Ali went on to become the only man in history to win the heavyweight title three times.

Muhammad Ali is much more than just a sporting icon; he is a cultural icon. 'I Am the Greatest: Muhammad Ali at the O2' captures Ali's journey of triumph, loss, notoriety, and redemption, through a collection of videos, photographs and memorabilia, all tied together by an audio tour, with commentary provided largely by Davis Miller, Ali's close friend and biographer.

Before visitors even see the entrance to the exhibition area, they can expect to hear commentary from Ali's most famous bouts as they walk around the O2. Once inside, the first room of the exhibition shows us the familiar Ali, training, sparring and enjoying his playful, poetic relationship with the press. A corridor of beautiful, wall-sized, black-and-white photographs of Ali follows, giving an insight into the hard work, the motivation, and the commitment required to be as successful an athlete as he was. It's genuinely inspiring.

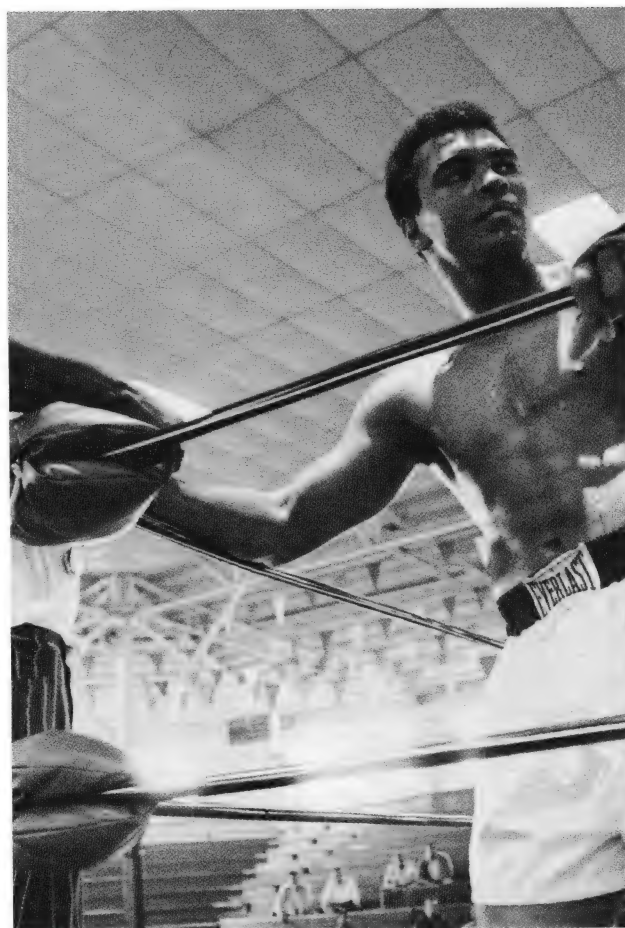
We're then taken back to Ali's childhood in what I assume is going to be the start of a chronologically presented showcase of Ali's career. We get to read and hear about Ali's neighbourhood, family and upbringing in Louisville, Kentucky, all in the context of the almost inconceivable politics of the time. We also learn how Ali became involved with boxing, and I would urge visitors to spend some time here, getting to see a little of the

development of the character we think we know: the unshakable confidence, the self-presentation as 'the greatest' developing long before any real boxing success.

We're then taken through Ali's incredible rise through the amateur ranks, leading up his gold medal winning performance in the 1960 Olympics, his inevitable decision to turn professional, and the beginnings of his relationship with trainer Angelo Dundee. The relationship between athlete and coach is of vital importance in elite sport, and while the impact of Dundee on Ali is alluded to more than once in the commentary, I was left wanting to know a little more about this aspect of Ali's career.

Visitors then enter an impressive rotunda, filled with rolling video clips of Ali's most memorable fights, and it's interesting for the non-boxing experts to hear about Ali's inimitable style while watching his most iconic performances. It's here though that the chronological presentation falls down somewhat. The audio tour, directs us immediately away from this section, into an area where we learn more about Ali's conversion to Islam, his draft evasion charge, and the loss of his title (which we don't know that he's won yet, because that's on the other side of the exhibition). Again, I would actually have liked to see more about this period in Ali's career, his transition from sporting personality to civil rights activist, to cultural icon during a turbulent time in American history. While 'I Am the Greatest' certainly captures the significant moments of this period, the impact of the section is somewhat diminished by that fact that we haven't yet learned just how much Ali had to lose by the decisions he made.

Back to the central area of the exhibition, though, we're guided through a history of Ali's fights, with a useful timeline for those confused by the somewhat distracting layout. The collection of memorabilia here, and indeed throughout the exhibition, isn't what I would describe as 'the greatest'. There are signed gloves, and



replica belts, medals and robes, and it's well put together; but for me, the tale being told is more important, more captivating, than the artefacts on display.

The triumph of this exhibition is in the story. The collection of Ali's greatest fights, the audio commentary that adds some personal insight, the photographs adorning the walls, all in one place, are what makes this exhibition worthwhile. We're only given a brief look at Ali's later life and his battle with Parkinson's disease, but photographs of him with the Dali Lama, Malcom X, and Bill Clinton, amongst others, as well as more personal stories from Davis Miller, show clearly how Ali has cemented his place in history.

Finally, sitting in a mock-up boxing ring, we're treated to a video montage of Ali's career, which beautifully brings into perspective everything we've seen throughout the exhibition. It's a strangely emotional experience as we end, in stark contrast to the opening segment, with a man subdued by Parkinson's disease, quiet, reflective, but still Muhammad Ali... still 'The Greatest'.

I Am the Greatest runs until 31 August at the O2 Arena, London.
www.aliattheo2.com/theexhibition.php
Reviewed by Dr Peter Olusoga who is Senior Lecturer in Sport Psychology at Sheffield Hallam University



A moving journey

Inside the Mind of a Gambler: The Hidden Addiction and How to Stop
Stephen Renwick

This book offers an insightful vision into the nature of a pathological gambling addiction, successfully exploring the many challenges experienced by affected cases and helpful ways in which to recover.

The book is split into two well-written sections. It begins with a fascinating case of a gambler called Guy, highlighting his subjective experiences, challenges and inspirational recovery. The author then considers psychological theories of gambling, identifying potential predisposing and precipitating factors, an amalgamation of relevant aetiological theories, and an excellent section regarding treatment approaches.

I particularly enjoyed the chapter partly written in the form of an interview between Stephen Renwick and Guy: it was honest and

refreshing to read. Having myself only dealt with a theoretical side of gambling addiction, it allowed me to explore gambling truly through the mind of a gambler.

Guy's moving journey, from devastating situations to a gambling-free life, through self-help and strength, provides a wonderful sense of hopefulness! His advice, along with the author's depth of explanation, I believe has great potential to provide support to practising professionals, as well as to affected cases on a path to recovery. Overall, an insightful, engaging and well-written book.

I *Trafford Publishing; 2015; Pb £5.54*
Reviewed by Despina Lazarou
who holds a master's degree in abnormal and clinical psychology and is an honorary assistant psychologist



Exudes authenticity

Sugar and Snails
Anne Goodwin

Fiction can be what it wishes – reliable, unreliable, truthful or deceitful – and in the hands of someone with grounding and knowledge, it can do those things with integrity. This is what Goodwin achieves in her penetrative story of Diana's self-discovery, and it's a riveting read.

It begins in the middle, proceeding then in intermittent flashbacks reminiscent of PTSD, skimming the peaks of past events, then plummeting into their valleys. You discover Diana alongside Diana herself, although there are hints on the way for the sharp-minded. 'Dropping the knife, I bring my arm to my mouth: the vibrant colour, the taste of hot coins, the pain as sharp as vinegar spearing the fug of nothingness with the promise of peace.' The language is raw at times, academically precise at others. Goodwin's character, a psychologist, questions, denies, and stumbles towards her own truth in a way that exudes authenticity. Where professionals can describe and categorise trauma and evaluate the extent to which individuals deal with it, fiction delivered by a writer who knows not only how to craft her words but also what those words should be communicating can bang it home with vivid, unrelenting imagery.

I *Inspired Quill; 2015; Pb £8.99*
Reviewed by Dr Suzanne Conboy-Hill, *a former consultant psychologist with Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, and writer of short fiction.*

A case for more support



Employable Me
BBC Two

It's 9.41pm and I'm sitting here weeping over a telly programme, my heart full of compassion for Brett, who has just been offered a work trial. Finally, an employer has seen past Brett's communication difficulties and is prepared to give him a chance to use his skills. My joy knows no limits, and that's what the programme makers were no doubt after: to raise awareness and engage our emotions.

By following two individuals, we come to understand more about their struggles with autistic thinking, and Tourette's syndrome, and there are examples of strengths given too. Personally, I would have liked more explanation about the conditions, and both the struggles and the talents; perhaps these will be covered in later episodes. As a nation, it seems we don't understand neurodiversity very well. Wouldn't it be great if this stuff could be taught in schools? (I know, that applies to psychology generally, doesn't it? C'mon, let's start a revolution...) Also, job interviews: poor validity, and so often an unnecessary barrier. Discuss.

On hand as 'informed advocates' were psychologists Professor Simon Baron-Cohen and Nancy Doyle, to explain to employers what the individual is capable of and what their challenges are. The programme gave the impression that neither protagonist had received much help with their employment struggles; they had each had a diagnosis, and there the support appeared to have ended. It's



clear to me as a psychologist that there is a massive amount of work we could usefully be doing, contributing not only to the better working of society (by better use of our people's skills) but helping individuals to feel more accepted. (Brett's employer, after the two-week work trial, described him as a 'considered, delicate, bucketful of intelligence,' and while I'm sure that Brett is much more than that, isn't that a lovely phrase?)

And yet, the need is still there.

We could be helping both individuals and society. But we are not being asked to. Why is that? And what can be done about it?

P.S. The two specialists featured, Simon Baron-Cohen and Nancy Doyle, both did a great job as ambassadors for psychology. But am I the only one who noticed that Simon Baron-Cohen is always referred to in the voiceover using his full name, whereas there was a reference to 'Occupational psychologist Nancy'? Please, BBC, tell me you are not being sexist!

I *Reviewed by Sarah Cleaver who is a Chartered Psychologist; along with Nancy Doyle, who featured in the programme, she co-convenes the Division of Occupational Psychology's Working Group on Neurodiversity and Employment. Contact Sarah on sarah@honestpsychology.com. The working group is hosting a two-day Learning a Living workshop in September on assessments for neurodiverse adults; please contact learning@bps.org.uk for details.*

A particularly elegant mathematical formula



Calculating Kindness
Camden People's Theatre

A quote on the cover of Oren Harman's biography of American population geneticist George Price says that it 'would make a great film (probably starring Matt Damon)'. His life certainly provides the template for a very impressive play.

Bursting onto the stage, Price (played by Adam Burton) announces that most people probably won't understand much of what he says, given that he has inherited traits of extraordinarily high intellect and a genius for all things reasonable and scientific. He makes these claims at breakneck speed and with such a charming, disarming, finely honed wit that the audience immediately warms to him. Almost the first thing he does after coming on stage is shake hands with everyone in the front row. But very little in this play has a single unambiguous meaning and even this gesture of seemingly straightforward intimacy and connection deserves reflection and interpretation. And as the play and Price's life story unfolds, keeping a firm grip on what things truly mean becomes ever more challenging.

In a key scene early in the play, Price 'mansplains' to a

receptionist that she is mistaken in her thoughts about humanity. Whatever people may feel about free will, morality, and love, he says, everything about us is the result of deterministic genetic evolution. With hints of mania, Price proclaims that he has recently fashioned a particularly elegant mathematical formula that expresses the crux of evolutionary theory perfectly. In almost the same breath, he mentions that he has also recently abandoned his wife and two small children.

In this scene, Price clearly articulates the difference between 'evolutionary altruism' and near-synonyms for 'altruism' in everyday life, such as benevolence, charity and kindness. The former is a theoretically described phenomenon in which genes for inherited traits become less numerous in successive generations, a process that should usually result in extinction of those traits as inherited characteristics. Despite common use of the word 'altruism', evolutionary altruism and behaviours motivated by desires to help others have no necessary connection. Being considerate and helpful might sometimes



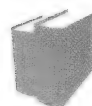
lead to evolutionary altruism but so too might being unerringly socially oblivious and utterly self-serving. Depending on the environment, almost any behavioural trait can result in evolutionary altruism – or indeed in evolutionary 'selfishness'. Besides, most everyday behaviours are neither determined solely by specific inherited traits nor have any significant evolutionary effect.

Price gradually loses both the clarity of this distinction and his grasp of reality more generally. He begins to see everything as resulting solely from evolutionary processes, and he increasingly desperately struggles to find room in the world for anything else of value or meaning. At one stage he appears to claim that the colour of the shirts in his wardrobe is the result of Darwinian selection. Price's descent into madness is echoed by increasingly chaotic scenes on stage. As his connection with the world becomes ever more

tenuous, people who care about him find it increasingly difficult to maintain or re-establish a connection with him. At the play's bleakest moment, Price completely disappears from view and is replaced by a slowly spreading dark stain. Despite many excellent comic moments throughout the play, the mood moves inexorably from ebullience to a sombre and troubling sense of loss.

This is a clever play and with great creativity it explores multiple issues, including ambition, identity, meaning, responsibility, sanity, truth and value. Ultimately, it concerns relationships of all sorts, e.g. between science and theatre, intellect and feeling, theory and practice, reality and illusion, continuity and change, intentions and consequences, and, of course, between people.

I Reviewed by Tom Farsides
who is a Lecturer in Social Psychology at the University of Sussex



'You say coaching, I say...'

The Art of Coaching: A Handbook of Tips and Tools
Jenny Bird & Sarah Gornall

As an NHS clinical psychologist, I'd often wondered how coaching might fit in with therapy and other responsibilities (e.g. supervision, mentoring and managing staff). I should say that the book *is* for coaches and those already familiar with coaching but the authors say that it can be used in leadership, decision making, managing change and supervision contexts. So that's a shoe-in for adopting it in situations and with people where it might help.

They introduce the book gamely as 'a book of drawings' to stimulate visual thinking, help people see the world in different ways and to emphasise *relationship* at the heart of the enterprise of coaching. So

far so good with pinching their ideas! The 'coachee' (trainee, client, employee?) is encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings in a diagram or drawing to see things afresh and to develop a plan of action that is relevant and unique to them – the practical visualisation of 'issues' intended to clarify where someone is at and where they might go.

The authors encourage boldness and creativity in using the tips and tools, described clearly and succinctly in eight chapters with the same format: what this is, how we use it and putting it into action. They suggest dipping into the book for fun and inspiration, with their overall approach light

in touch and generous to readers to choose how to use the book and to let the authors know 'where it has taken you'.

I'd anticipate this book as probably particularly valuable to coaches but would suggest that therapists, mentors and managers see it as a kind of play-box of interesting ideas (some no doubt already familiar), to help share, clarify and maybe solve what's going wrong and what might go right. Communication, learning, influencing, facilitation – what's not to try?

I Routledge; 2016; Pb £24.99
Reviewed by Marie Stewart who is a Principal Clinical Psychologist



A questioning film

Anomalisa
Charlie Kaufman (Director)

The writer and director of the film *Anomalisa*, Charlie Kaufman, is not a psychologist. But he is obviously fascinated by the human psyche, and has used psychology in playful and imaginative ways in previous films (such as autobiographical memory in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*). His films also always have a surreal bent, and *Anomalisa* is no different.

It was made using a painstakingly stop-motion animation method, with foot-high puppets. The medium means that there's no pretence of 'reality', but the storyline is all too boringly real. Michael Stone (voiced by David Thewlis) is a well-known author and speaker, flying into Cincinnati for one night to promote his book. We see Michael arrive on the plane; take a taxi to his hotel (driven by an aggressively chatty driver); check into the hotel; follow the porter carrying his small bag, and listen to a description of the room and its facilities. Each step has a ritual that cannot be short-circuited. There's not just the politeness that two strangers must show each other, there's the fact that one is the customer, and the other is providing a service. Naturally, the book that Michael is promoting is about giving good customer service. But what about the customer himself? What if he doesn't care about 'customer service'? What if he just wants to get to the hotel and lie down in his room with minimal human interaction? Anyone who has ever felt dehumanised by a stay in a chain hotel for one night (which must be everyone) will sympathise.

But it's during Michael's journey to his hotel room that the central conceit of the film becomes apparent (this has been widely reported, but don't read on if you want it to remain a surprise). Everyone except Michael looks the same. Everyone except Michael has the same voice (provided by Tom Noonan). It takes a little while to realise this, maybe because puppet faces are not human faces, and have an intrinsic 'sameness'. The effect is deadening, confusing, disconcerting.

The hotel Michael has checked into is called The Fragoli, which is a reference to Fragoli delusion, a rare delusional misidentification syndrome. This is the delusion that different people are the same person, but in disguise or with otherwise changed appearance. It is normally a paranoid delusion, with the delusional person believing

that they are being persecuted by the person in disguise. Michael does not appear paranoid, although he is depressed. But then he hears a different voice in the corridor, a woman's voice (Jennifer Jason Leigh), and everything changes.

Kaufman has been here before. In *Being John Malkovich*, which Kaufman wrote, John Malkovich finds himself in a restaurant where every single man, woman and child is played by John Malkovich. It is both extremely funny and sinister. *Anomalisa* is never quite that funny or menacing, although it does have one scene of unsurpassed awkwardness and embarrassment, which human actors could not



better. It is, however, a questioning film. Kaufman is interested in physical appearance, and especially faces: What does it mean to be in a world where faces are not unique? But he is saying much more about identity, and the essence of being human. Identical faces might be a metaphor for our identical (deluded?) selves – is the only real difference between us is that you order a Cobb salad and I order steak from room service? It's likely you'll leave *Anomalisa* deep in thought, which is rare for Hollywood, and praise indeed.

I Reviewed by Kate Johnstone who is Associate Editor for 'Reviews'

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Dr Robyn Walser, Dr Mary Welford, Compassionate Mind Foundation others to be confirmed

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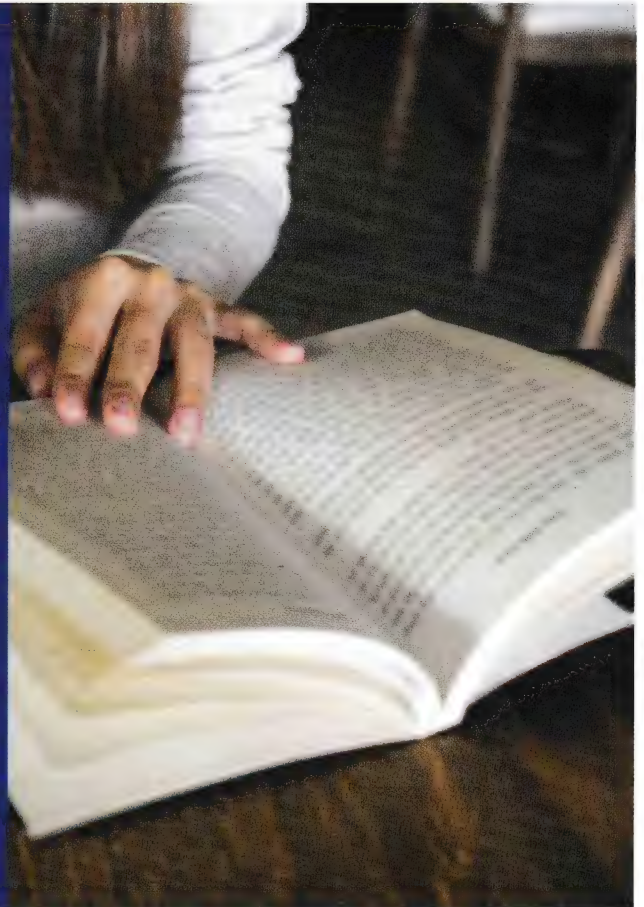
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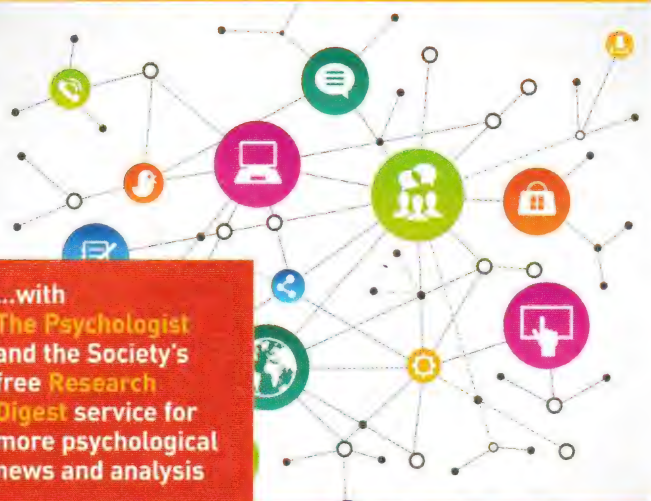
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Happiness then and now

Sandie McHugh and Jerome Carson describe two happiness surveys from Bolton, 76 years apart

There has been an explosion of popular interest in the topic of happiness in the last decade involving psychologists (Ben-Shahar, 2008; Lyubomirsky, 2014) and economists (Layard, 2011; Dolan, 2015). Journalists and headteachers have been getting in on the act (Bormans, 2012; Seldon, 2015). But this exploration of happiness is not a new phenomenon. Here, we report on pioneering research that was conducted in the UK town of Bolton in 1938, which we replicated in 2014 (McHugh & Carson, 2014). We summarise some of the key findings of this research and provide some insights into what made townsfolk happy then and now.

'Worktown' in the 1930s

As far as we can ascertain, one of the first public surveys into happiness was conducted in 1938 as part of the Mass Observation Study and sought to investigate a 'typical Northern industrial town'. Bolton was chosen, though the researchers referred to it as 'Worktown'. The Mass Observation Study was originally set up in 1937 by the anthropologist Tom Harrisson, poet Charles Madge and filmmaker Humphrey Jennings. Their aim was to research the everyday life of ordinary people via participant observation, photography and self-reflective expressions in essays and interviews, along with participation in competitions advertised in the local press.

As part of the study, an advertisement

appeared in *The Bolton Evening News* on 28 April 1938: 'You are asked to write simply what you personally think is HAPPINESS for you and yours. Don't bother about style or grammar just write it down.' (This was not the first newspaper to request its readers to write happiness letters. A few months earlier, the *Daily Mirror* had asked if its readers were happy, and if so to write 200 words about their secret of happiness.)

Bolton residents posted their letters to 85 Davenport Street in Bolton, and in return the 226 writers were each sent a questionnaire. It requested information on the respondent's age and job, and asked them how often were they really happy, whether it is easier to be happier at the weekend, in midweek or if it was all the same. What did they think about 'luck': did that have anything to do with happiness? As Blackpool was the main day trip and holiday resort for Boltonians, courtesy of frequent special trains, respondents were to say whether it was easier to be happy in Blackpool or Bolton. Finally they were asked to number 10 aspects of happiness in order of importance: more equality; beauty; leadership and authority; pleasure; security; politics; religion; humour; knowledge; action.

The Mass Observation Study was revived in 1981 after a dormant period from the 1960s. But the data from the letters and the questionnaires were not analysed until the next century, when in 2012 the historians Ian Gazeley and Claire

Langhamer at the University of Sussex investigated the Happiness data held in the Mass Observation Archive housed at Sussex (Gazeley & Langhamer, 2013). Then we re-ran the competition in collaboration with the *The Bolton News* in 2014, providing a unique comparative dataset of the perceptions of residents in Bolton on happiness collected 76 years apart.

In 1938 75 per cent of Bolton residents found it easier to be happier in Bolton than in Blackpool. As one housewife put it, 'Bolton is where home is', whereas a 19-year-old junior clerk preferred Blackpool because of its healthy air and holiday atmosphere. Indeed 'bracing' sea air must have been a welcome change to the smog-infused air that can be seen clinging to the town in contemporary photographs. Although many respondents worked long hours, often a six day week and sometimes in the dirty and dangerous conditions of heavy engineering and mining, the majority of respondents (72 per cent) reported they were equally happy during weekdays and at weekends.

Around 40 per cent of respondents considered that luck was connected to happiness. This could relate to the weekly draw on the football pools, as a 25-year-old hoped to be lucky enough to 'win a little', or to circumstances as a 36-year-old spinner reported that continuous bad luck can bring on depression. A clerical worker was emphatic: 'No! Luck has nothing to do with happiness.'

In the ranking of 10 aspects of happiness, 'more security' and 'religion' were high up the list for many individuals. A 36-year-old milkman ranked 'security' first and 'leadership and authority' as 10, commenting that he was always happy as he 'restricted his desires to his pocket'. A 59-year-old weaver who considered happiness came from a healthy state of mind ranked 'religion', 'knowledge' and 'security' 1–3, with 'pleasure' and 'politics' at 9 and 10. A 44-year-old collier put 'more equality' at number 1 with 'beauty' at 2 and 'leadership' at 10. The top three aspects of happiness for all the respondents were 'security' (a third had placed this at the top of their list); 'knowledge'; and then 'religion'. 'Politics' was ranked at 10, with 'leadership' at 9 and 'leisure' 8.

The top place for security is not surprising when we consider that there was no welfare state in 1938. Contributory benefits were available for workers only when unemployed or sick: for everyone else, there was a form of meagre means-tested allowance. Health care was provided at a voluntary hospital.

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It would be another decade before the NHS was formed and the welfare state set up. The high placement of 'knowledge' may be due to the desire for learning and understanding. The vast majority left school at 14, and with no internet or TV, knowledge was not as readily available as today. The importance of religion reflects the 200 churches and chapels in the town for a population of around 177,000.

What do the letters from mass observation in 1938 tell us about the perceptions of happiness at that time prior to the Second World War? There were momentous developments on the European stage, with a victory for General Franco in the Spanish Civil War, and the occupation of Austria and parts of Czechoslovakia by Hitler's armies. In their 2013 analysis, Gazeley and Langhamer estimate that less than 1 in 25 of the letters refer to world events. Happiness was mainly to be found in the home and personal relationships. A miner, Joseph Roberts, summed up the main elements of happiness for many Bolton residents

concerned about having enough: Mrs Pasquill wrote: 'Money by itself can't buy you happiness, but it makes you happy and contented to know you have enough for all your requirements and a little put by for a rainy day.' She also referred, as did many of her fellow writers, to the central role of religion in her life 'having faith and trust in God'. Mrs Maxwell describes her spiritual quest as 'putting yourself last and being ready to serve others'. On wishing for a world at peace, Mrs Ruston also treasures the love of her family and a few close friends.

'Leisure' town in 2014?

In the 2014 questionnaire 'leisure' replaced 'pleasure' and 'security' became 'economic security' to reflect 21st century change of discourse. (Happiness letters indicated that pleasure meant free time and security did not refer to prevention of crime but to making ends meet.) As letter writing had declined in the 21st century, we left space on the 2014 questionnaire for Boltonians to express their personal view of happiness.

The web or paper questionnaire was very similar to that of 1938, with the 10 aspects of happiness, frequency, time of week, venue and luck questions. As an additional measure to frequency of happiness we included an enjoyment question and requested respondents to indicate on a Likert scale 1–10 from 'not at all' to 'completely' how much they enjoyed their daily life. To ascertain

the importance of the consumer society, we asked whether happiness was directly linked to material possessions and wealth. *The Bolton News* was pleased to run a 'Happy Week' in February 2014, providing information on the 1938 mass observation along with articles on how to be happy and stories from local residents of their own experiences. This resulted in 489 completed questionnaires from the weblink at the newspaper and paper questionnaires available in Bolton town centre.

Only 'economic security' maintained a place in the top three aspects of happiness in both 1938 and 2014, moving from first to second place. Having enough to meet living expenses is a major concern, regardless of the provision of welfare.

However, the comments from the questionnaires in 2014 indicate that having 'enough' may often be more about being able to afford experiences, such as holidays and leisure pursuits, rather than just enough to eat. 'Good humour' was the top aspect of happiness in 2014, up from fourth, with the importance of 'leisure' also rising, to third up from eighth position in 1938. Thirty-nine per cent of 2014 respondents found it easier to be happy at weekends, compared with only 26 per cent in 1938. Religion dropped from third place to tenth in 2014: although Bolton has 81 places of worship, the town has seen a continual decline in church attendances as has the rest of the UK.

The role of luck remained unchanged, with around 40 per cent of respondents connecting it with happiness. Whereas 75 per cent of 1938 residents were happier in Bolton than in Blackpool, this had declined to 39 per cent preferring to be in Bolton than elsewhere in 2014, perhaps reflecting the importance of holidays. Yet the majority (60 per cent) of those who reported a high enjoyment in daily life were happiest in Bolton and found happiness every day. On the question of the link between wealth and happiness, 77 per cent of respondents declared there was none. The essence of happiness as reflected in the comments was rooted in family, friends, pets, and leisure activities. 'Happiness is simple things like going out for a walk with the dog. You don't need tons of materials things to be happy' (47-year-old employed woman). To a young woman in her twenties, 'spending time with family and friends' brought happiness. 'Having free time and enough money to do what I want' was the choice of a 50-year-old employed male. Other comments illustrate the concern for meeting living expenses with a 39-year-old male citing 'the ability to provide a good standard of living for my family' whilst a 36-year-old woman found happiness in 'having a good secure job'.

Conducting this research has provided us with a sense of how happiness has changed for Boltonians of the 1930s and in 2014. The original 1938 letters have proved to be an invaluable teaching tool, with today's psychology students. They have helped them see how concepts of happiness have changed across the last century, and no doubt will continue to do so.

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Bolton was chosen for the 1938 survey as a 'typical Northern industrial town', and the survey was repeated in 2014

when he described his homecoming from the pit. 'I see my kiddies and wife I am happy. When I am washed and romp with my kiddies, and when it is weekend and I tip up my humble wage and share with my wife in doling it out and we find we can manage another week we are happy. I am in regular work although it is hard and dangerous but I am happy because I have a contented mind, I can supply the sheekles to keep me and mine.'

Indeed, being free of worry and having enough to live on was not taken for granted in 1938, but acclaimed as a cause for happiness. Mrs Taylor wrote 'to be free from worry as you have enough money for a little pleasure and to keep you straight'. Most of the writers did not desire riches and wealth, but they were

... with Peter Kinderman

'How to fight against creation'

One book

The Plague, by Nobel prize-winner and existential philosopher Albert Camus. This book transformed my personal philosophy of life. Camus discusses the choices we make in an unfair, absurd and (at least in my mind) deterministic universe. The hero of the novel, Dr Rieux, is challenged as to why he continues to provide medical care without any hope of success: '... in this respect Rieux believed himself to be on the right road – in fighting against creation as he found it.' The world constrains our freedom of action: the purpose of life is still to make moral choices even in the face of that unfairness and absurdity. We can't choose our genes, we can't choose our childhoods, we can't influence much of what happens to us in our lives, and we can't choose to change our personal history. And yet, like Rieux, we can still choose how to respond; how to fight against creation.



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One inspiration

Just after I qualified as a clinical psychologist, I had the chance to pursue a combined academic and clinical career by working with Richard Bentall, who became my PhD supervisor and general inspiration, mentor, colleague and occasional sparring partner. I went to meet Richard to discuss the possibility of collaborating on some research – he was already well known in psychology circles. It was the day of Margaret Thatcher's resignation as leader of the Tory Party and therefore Prime Minister. I was waiting outside his office, a little nervous, when he sprung into the corridor, looked up and down, saw me and said (the first words he said to me): 'The bitch has resigned!' Sometimes you can form an impression of someone quite swiftly.

One nugget of advice for aspiring psychologists

Say yes... to everything within reason.

One thing that you would change about psychology

I'd remove the concept of 'abnormal psychology' from our thinking, from our textbooks, from our curricula. We don't expect scientists to

apply one special branch of physics to car crashes and differentiate this from the laws of physics that apply to 'normal life'. We all use the same basic processes to understand the world, even if we come to very different conclusions. There simply isn't an 'abnormal psychology' that applies to distress or explains 'illnesses' and a different 'normal psychology' that applies to everything else. There is just psychology.

One choice

Psychologists should remember that we are all either fighting for social justice or morally bankrupt if we aren't. Read *The Spirit Level* by Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson. It isn't a 'psychology' book, it's more economic sociology, but it highlights not only how unequal we are as a society, but also the level of harm that this inequality causes. I think psychologists should read it for the 'Camus' point – that so much of our experience as human beings, even our thinking, is constrained by our social circumstances, our culture, our upbringing and learning. And psychologists should also read it to ask 'psychological' questions: In what sense is our thinking shaped by our environment, and how does that happen? What gives some people the resilience, creativity or motivation to become statistical outliers and achieve more than their social cohort? What role does professional psychology have in the battle for universal human rights and social justice?

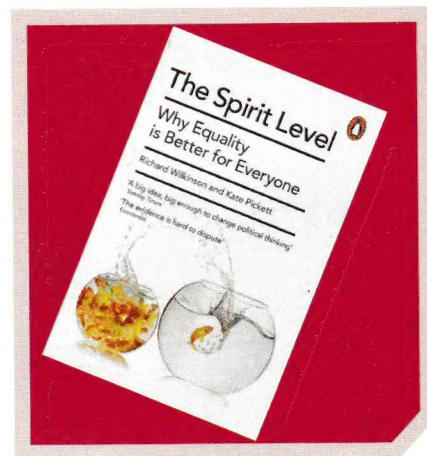
One regret

A very radical haircut I had 24 hours before beginning filming for a BBC *Horizon* programme. If only I'd been able to appear on TV with a

sexy haircut, my entire career would have turned out differently!

One thing that organised psychology could do better

Pretty much everything. The APA is strong, effective, visible, powerful. But there are many things that the APA could have done with that strength – support reforms of the American healthcare system, oppose the appalling gun culture in the US, speak out more about racial and social inequity. And, of course, the Guantanamo Bay waterboarding scandal still casts a shadow.



The BPS has many of those faults too – it seems to be weirdly reluctant to campaign on issues of importance to members, let alone members of the public. It's a charity, with a statutory requirement to promote psychological science for the good of citizens. In my mind the BPS is wonderful, but it really does need to do better in almost every area of its operations. That's not just 'the BPS', it's members, too – members of the BPS should be out there, on the radio, on TV, writing to Ministers and their MPs, asking questions on *Question Time*... and helping 'the Society' by writing reports, articles for the newspapers, leaflets for the public and even, sorry, by joining committees.

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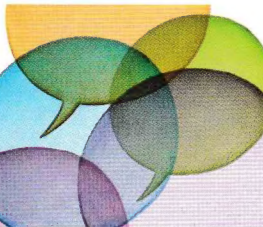
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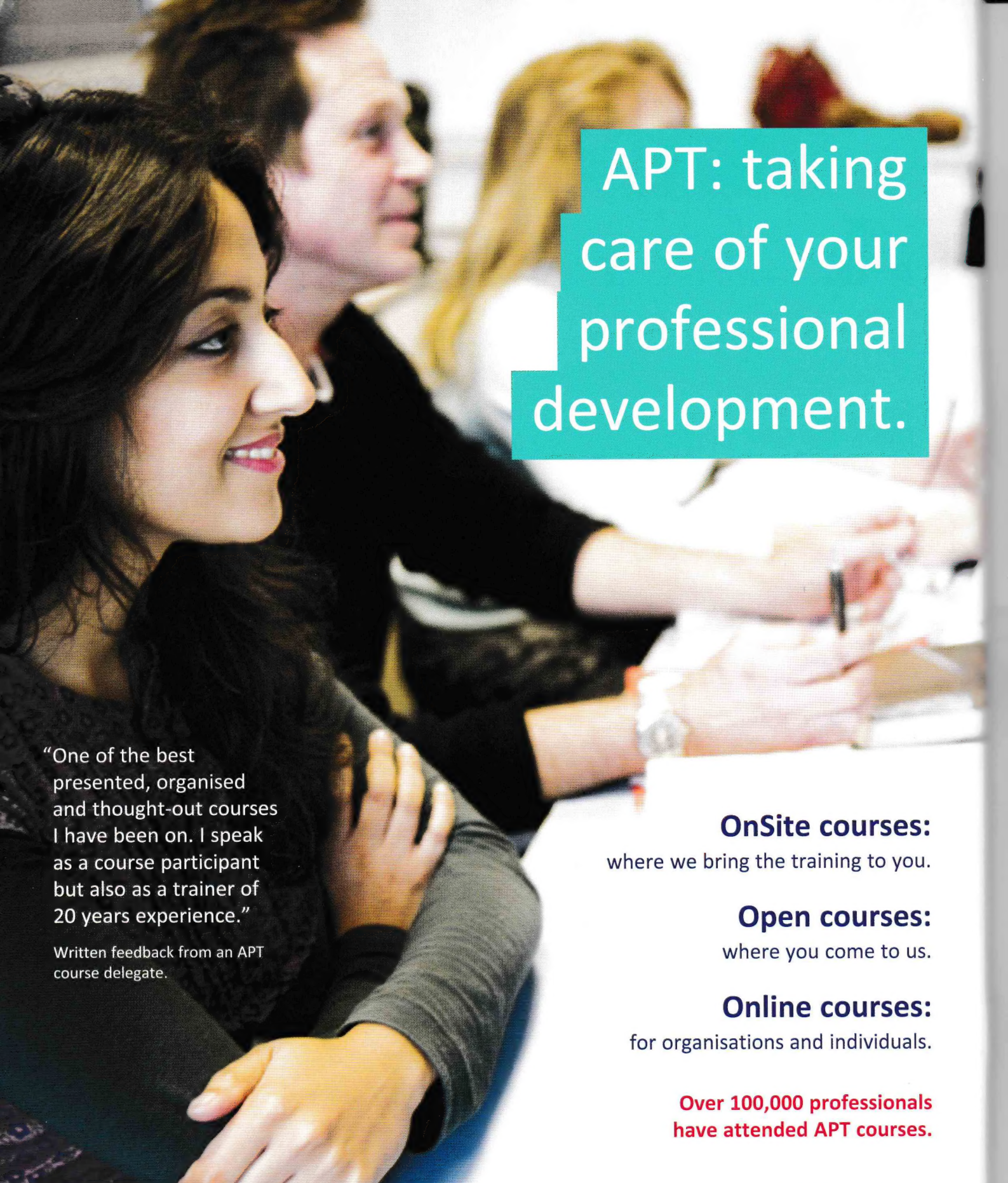
Psychology of Education Section Annual Conference, Birmingham, 28–29 October 2016
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Research Seminars Competition 2016 – submissions invited See p.376

DGP Faculty for Children, Young People & Their Families Conference, Sheffield, 4–5 October 2016 See p.379

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